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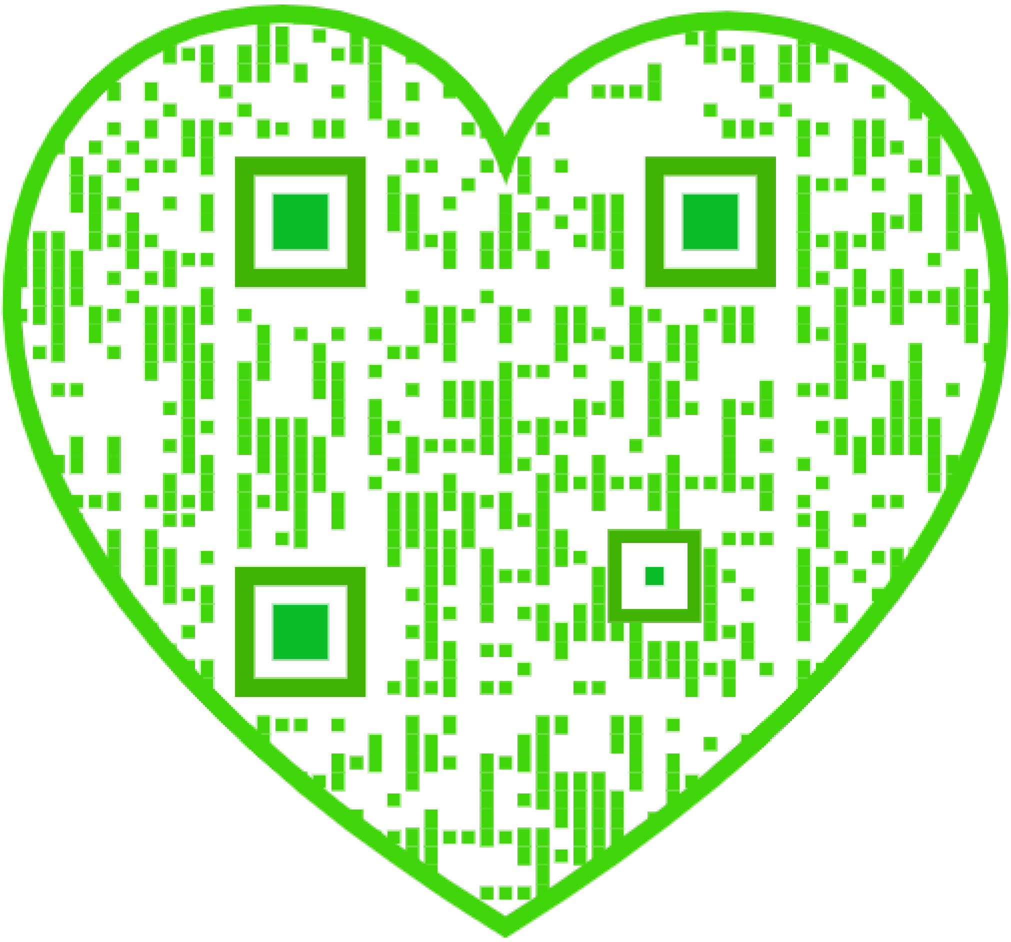

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Welcome

As of March 2025, it's been 10 years since the landmark Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act came into force. Brought to parliament by Richard Bacon MP, who stepped aside at the last general election, the Act seeks to increase choice and diversity in the UK housing market. The approach it takes is to require local authorities in England and Wales to permission sufficient serviced plots to meet demand for self-commissioned homes in their areas. That demand is measured on so-called Right to Build registers.

The most recent data collected by the National Self and Custom Build Association (NaCSBA) and LivedIn shows that, for the 2019 base period, 86,083 people were on a local self build register in England. Between them, councils granted permission for 50,632 plots in the three-year window they have to satisfy demand – a stark deficit of 31%. While disappointing, that averages out at 16,877 plots per year. If those sites were all built out, we'd be taking a small step in the right direction, albeit still way behind the annual target of 20,000 completed self and custom build homes set by the previous government.

Perhaps more damning is the fact that 201 of the 319 (63%) English local authorities aren't meeting demand. In other words, a few good apples are significantly skewing the stats. There is genuinely some great work going on. Councils such as Teignbridge, for instance, have pioneered 5% policies that require bigger developments to make plots available to self builders. Others, such as City of York, South Gloucestershire, Central Bedfordshire and Mid-Devon councils, are even paid-up NaCSBA supporters, helping to spread the word on the benefits of self build and share best practice. Let's hope others – including our new(ish) government – pick up on it.

Chris

CHRIS BATESMITH, CONTENT DIRECTOR

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renovation & building

WHEN ARE BIFOLDS BEST?

Scarlett Deamer takes a look at this eye-catching glazing style to help you decide if it's the right fit for your project

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expert help

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST TO BUILD A HOUSE?

Calculating how much it'll cost to take your dream home from concept to completion is arguably the most important aspect of a successful project. Mark Stevenson takes a look at what will impact your budget to ensure a smooth build from start to finish

COVER IMAGE: VINCENT DENECKER'S TIMBER FRAME HOME, DESIGNED BY LAPD ARCHITECTS (PAGE 28). PHOTO: DAVID STEWART

MEET THE TEAM

SANDER TEL is Build It's digital features editor. Alongside putting together content at www.self-build.co.uk, this issue he's curated a wow-factor selection of bungalow projects (page 19).

ERIKA CHAFFEY is Build It's features writer. This month, she looks at cladding options for timber builds (page 68) and the benefits of rooflights and lanterns for extensions (74).

SCARLETT DEAMER is Build It's editorial assistant. From page 9, she's sourcing the latest news, products and materials. On page 64, she helps you decide if bifold doors are best for your home.

MARK STEVENSON has years of experience in the construction industry and is the current chair of NaCSBA. On page 96, he investigates what it costs to build a bespoke house in 2025.

OPINDER LIDDAR is a Build It Award-winning architect and director of Lapd Architects. In this issue, he shares his expert advice on regulating sound in new build homes (page 92).

JULIA RIDDLE is a planning consultant with a wealth of experience in self and custom building, and a regular at Build It Live. Read her insightful articles at self-build.co.uk/julia

ALAN TIERNEY is a historic buildings expert and conservation specialist. On page 77 he shares his top tips for sustainably renovating a listed property. For more from Alan visit self-build.co.uk/alan

MARTIN GAINE is a former council case officer turned independent planning consultant, and a Build It Live expert. See page 100 for his in-depth look at the UK planning system.

NIGEL GRIFFITHS is Build It's sustainability expert, specialising in eco homes and renewable energy. On page 89, he explores the decisions that will help you design and fit a more sustainable kitchen.

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Designed to impress 38
Mike and Karuna Wood gave their North London home a new lease of life with a complete renovation and modern extension. Wow-factor features like coffered ceilings and a rain garden, have turned this house into a light-filled oasis

Home stretch 46
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COVER STORY **Cladding for timber homes** 68
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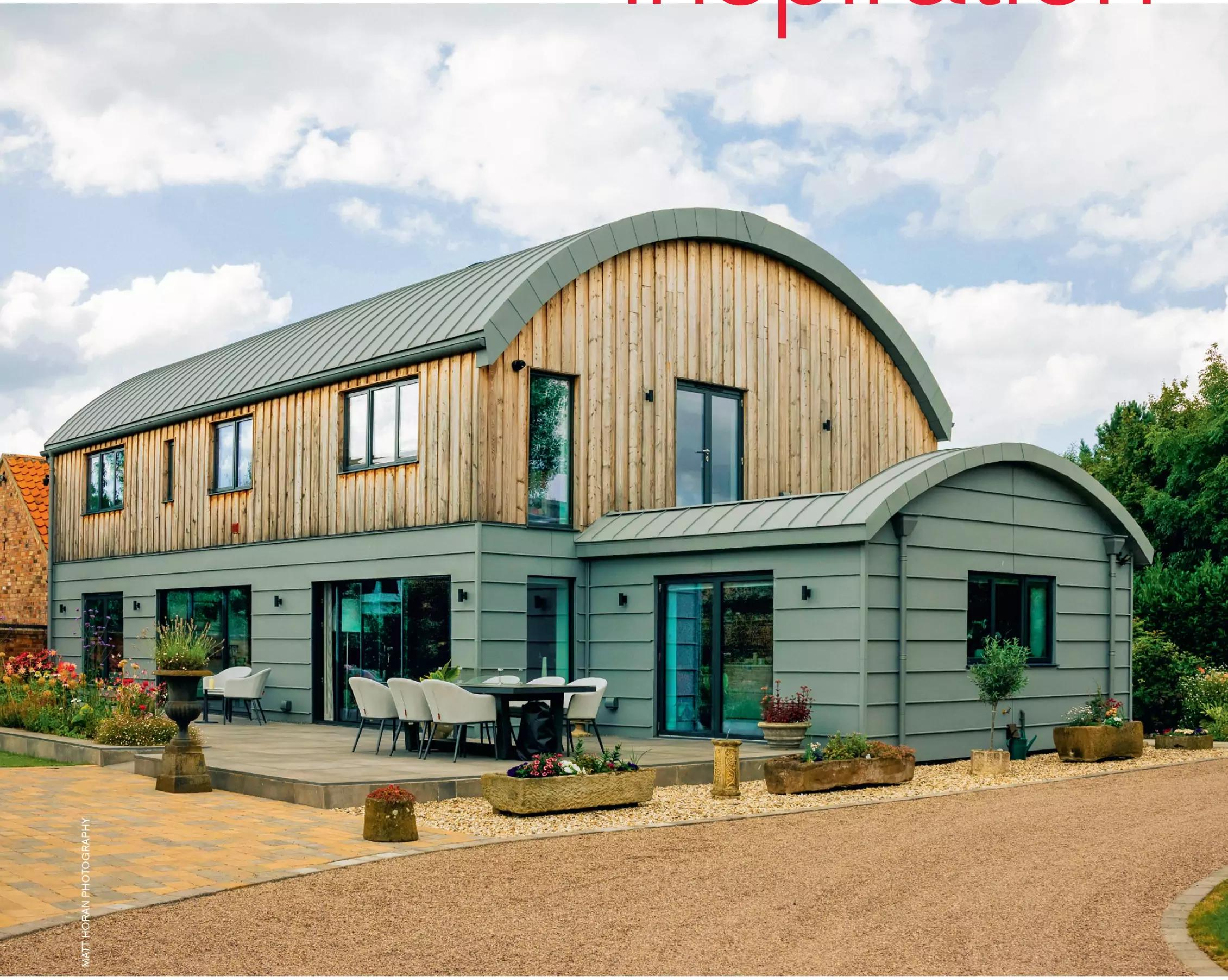

MATT HORAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Impressive Dutch barn conversion

Design Haus Architecture thoughtfully adapted this historic barn into a spacious, tranquil home, nestled in the idyllic Nottinghamshire countryside. Accessibility was at the forefront of the owners' requirements. They wanted a house that both respected the building's historic form and fulfilled their need for improved circulation.

The innovative design works harmoniously within the established envelope of the barn. Ancillary areas, such as the utility, boot room and cloakroom, were re-orientated for more practical usage. A modern, open-plan living, dining and kitchen area incorporates carefully positioned glazing, framing the stunning vistas of the surrounding environment. Alongside the more private spaces on the upper floor, all the internal rooms offer level access.

Externally, the property's facade echoes the style of traditional Dutch barns, through the use of wood cladding to the upper level and an elegant curved roof. Zinc was chosen for the lower portions of the build, adding a touch of contemporary design to the original aesthetic. The two-toned exterior creates a wonderful contrast to the typical red brick and clay-tiled rooftops of neighbouring properties, cementing the home as a striking, stand-out feature within its agricultural setting.

Although beautiful, the garden's topography varies considerably. Convenient ramps were sensitively integrated into the landscape to ensure unimpeded movement across the site, while also enhancing fluidity between the charming indoor and outdoor spaces.

To find out more call 01156 788917 or visit designhausarchitecture.co.uk

PROJECT OF THE MONTH

Hoj House

by Studio Merlin

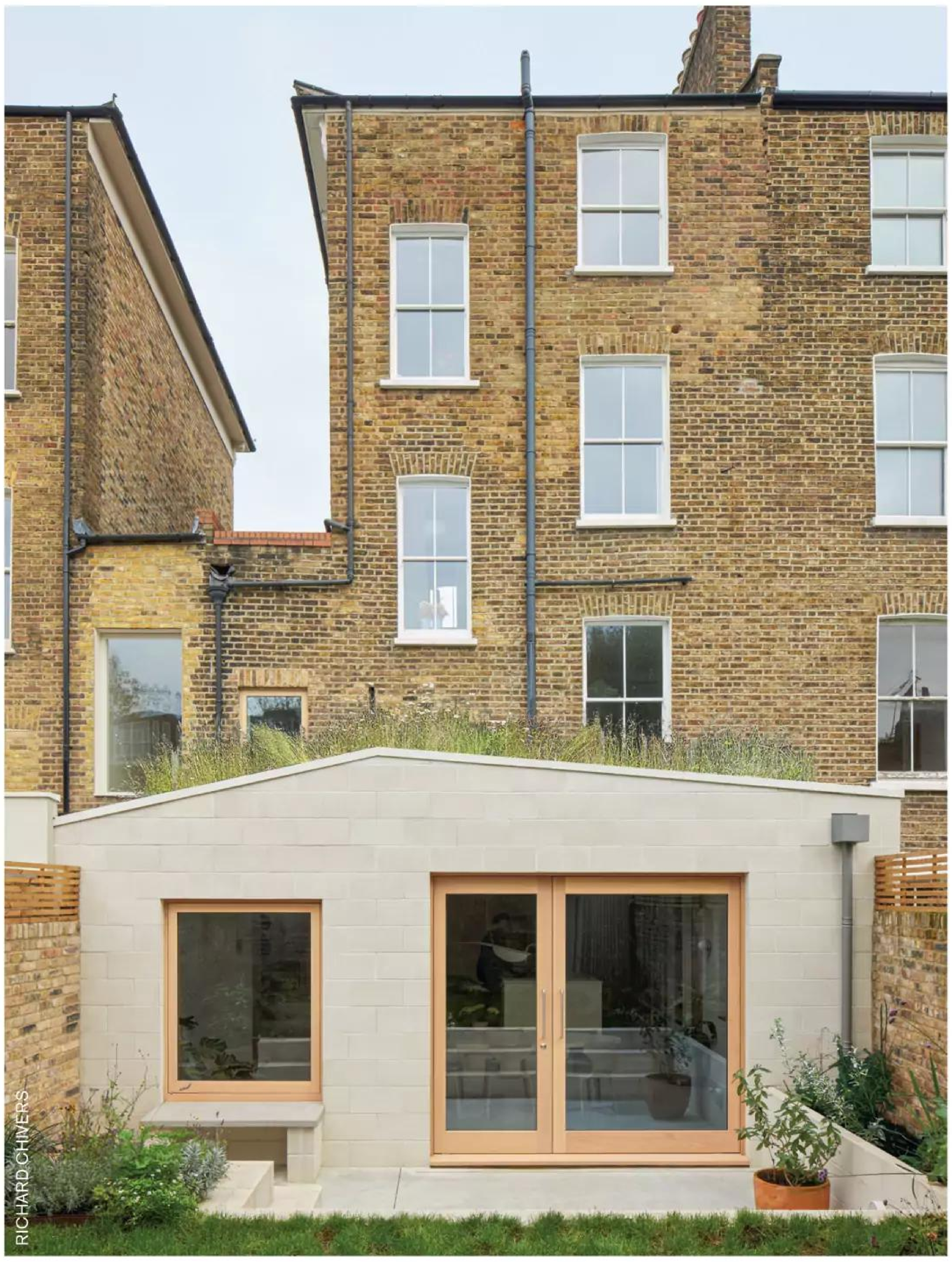
This rear extension to a Victorian terraced house in North East London, masterminded by Studio Merlin, was designed to help connect the living spaces to the owner's much-loved garden. Internally, an exposed Douglas fir roof structure adds wow with its rich amber tones. A neutral colour palette and polished concrete floor accentuate the effect, allowing the ceiling to take centre stage. Pastel pink and yellow stained timbers were chosen for the kitchen units, to pick up the hues of the structural joinery. Large pivot doors and frameless rooflights draw natural light deeper into the floorplan and provide better connectivity with the garden.

On the upper floors, the floorboards were refurbished, while the stair and balustrade were stripped back and colour blocked to match the timber elements used in the extension, improving visual cohesion within the home.

A patio was crafted from the same blocks as the extension, giving the area a sleek, modern appearance. A herb garden and integrated window bench embed the owner's love of the outdoors into the architectural form.

The property is situated within a critical drainage area, so a wildflower roof, bioplanter and permeable sub-base under the patio were cleverly incorporated to slow rainwater runoff into the public sewer.

For more information call 020 3397 3727 or visit studiomerlin.co.uk


RICHARD CHIVERS

Rise in demand for eco upgrades

A new survey by Electrify Britain has found that householders are becoming more jealous of their neighbours' sustainable home improvements. Over half (55%) of respondents, admitted that seeing other people installing solar panels, heat pumps and EV charging points has made them want to follow suit. Although taking a greener approach to renovating and homebuilding isn't anything new, with energy prices set to continue to rise, more people are shifting focus towards renewable technologies.

35,451

is the deficit between plots on which councils have granted permission for self-commissioned homes, versus the number of people signed up to Right to Build registers. Only 59% of demand has been met in regards to permissioned plots, and just 37% of councils are hitting their targets. Coming 10 years since the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act was passed, it demonstrates the need for government to do more to encourage councils to meet their mandated targets.

Increase in planning application fees

As of the 1st April, planning application fees have increased sharply to reflect the aims set out in the 2024 National Planning Policy Framework. Householder applications (which cover proposals to alter or extend a house) have risen from £258 to £528, for instance, while a discharge of conditions for a householder development has doubled to £86. Annual rises in line with inflation, have also been introduced. The jury's out on whether the rise will bring improvements in resourcing and approval rates.

What's on?

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INTRODUCTION TO GARDENING

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Walworthgarden.org.uk

ECO WORKSHOP

31ST MAY
FREE, SWINDON

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nsbrc.co.uk

DIY IN A DAY: PLUMBING

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£210, LONDON

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thegoodlifecentre.co.uk

DIY BASICS

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£80, BRIGHTON

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neonsaw.co.uk

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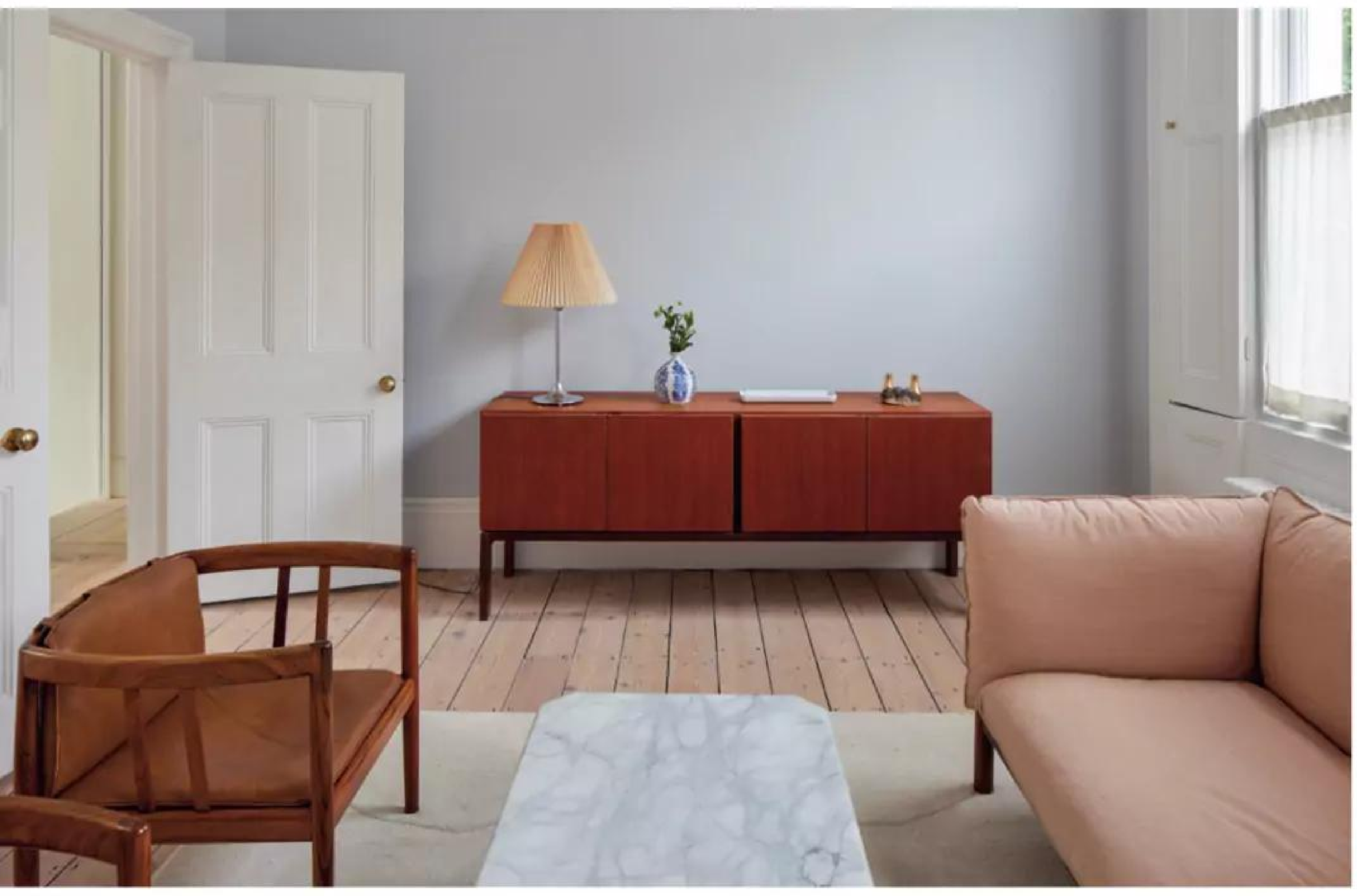


need to know

The importance of soil surveys

A soil survey or ground investigation is undertaken to determine the chemical and engineering properties of the underlying soil profile. The study typically consists of two main parts. Firstly, a geotechnical examination will be carried out to determine the plot's suitability for construction, including soil classification and strength tests to evaluate bearing capacity, settlement and stability. Secondly, a geo-environmental assessment will be conducted. This explores the specific soil and groundwater conditions to help identify any contamination risks and environmental impacts. A report can be required to make sure your project is meeting regulatory compliance.

Most projects can benefit from a soil survey, to cut costs which may crop up when the first spade hits the ground. Our work can be a condition of planning where contamination could be an issue, or it can be required to give designers the assurance their creations are suitable.

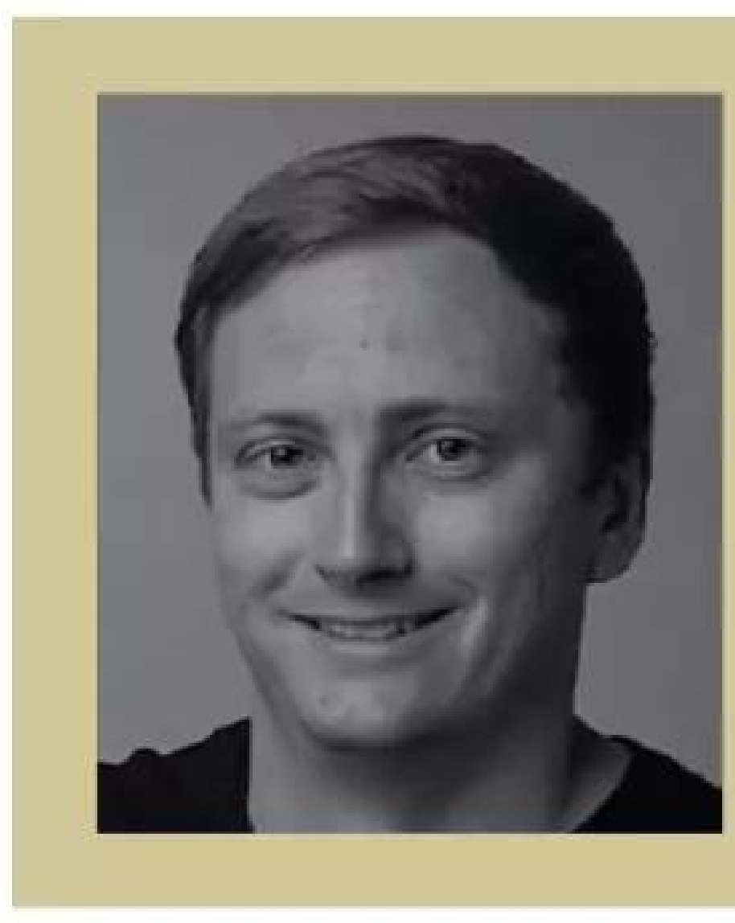
The survey will provide parameters for engineers, to enable them to create substructures which are appropriate for the ground condition. The investigation can be used to determine the soil's strength and stability, groundwater conditions, geological hazards such as sinkholes and landslides, and ground gas risks. These factors are crucial to ensure the structural elements of your build are safe.

Early engagement with a consultant is key to identify potential issues and getting them rectified. Desk-based assessments can be turned around in one to three weeks, but intrusive ground investigations can take around four to six weeks from instruction to issuing the final report.

Costs are proportionate to the scale of development and the level of complexity involved. Widespread, heavily contaminated areas or abundant historic mine networks, for example, will make the investigation much dearer. Our investigations are always designed to minimise costs and maximise the information obtained. Typically, reports start from around £2,500 for a single plot build.

There are lots of excellent ground investigation companies in the UK, but as with any part of your project, make sure you do your due diligence for peace of mind that you're getting a comprehensive survey. To check if your consultants have suitable experience, insurance and a proven track record, look for companies with Chartered Engineers (CEng), Chartered Environmentalists (CEnv) and Chartered Geologists (CGeol).

A great consultant will be able to identify key risks on the site from the underlying geology and experience. This will then allow them to design a suitable investigation that provides sufficient coverage and extrapolates the relevant data to meet the objectives and minimise the risk of any unforeseen ground conditions. By comprehensively understanding the soil conditions which are present on the site, the consultant can highlight and help overcome potential issues prior to starting the construction work.



OLIVER SCOTT is a chartered geotechnical engineer (CEng) and director at Karn Geoservices. With experience in ground investigations, he specialises in slope stability assessments and computer modelling, delivering precise and reliable geotechnical solutions. **www.karn-geo.co.uk**

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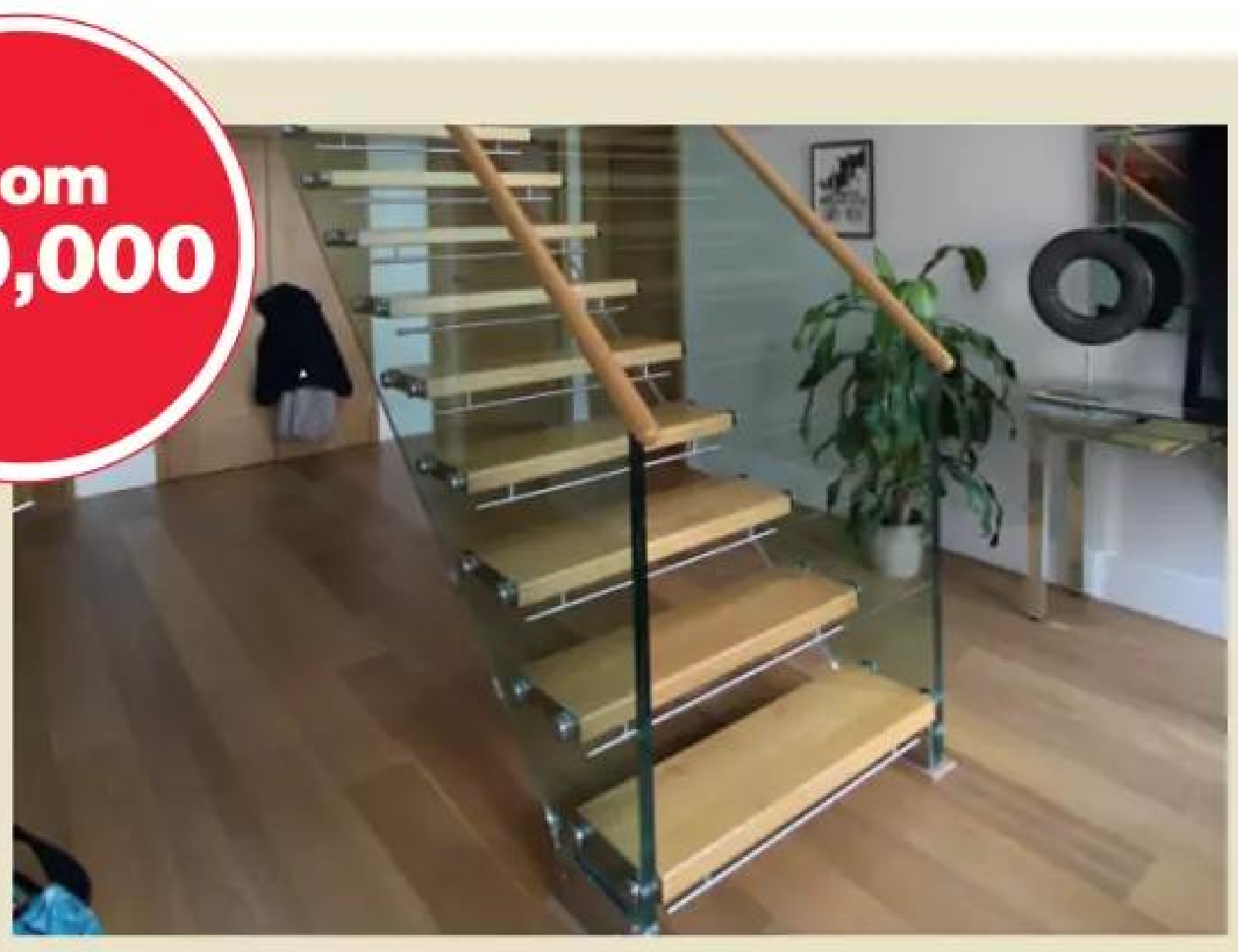

Crafted from European oak with structural glass balustrades on either side, these steps give the effect of floating in mid-air as you ascend and descend the flight. The staircase can be fitted without handrails for an even sleeker appearance. **Kloepping FL1225 floating staircase, from £30,000, kloeppingtss.co.uk**

From £16,800

Add some wow factor to your hallway with these elegant freestanding stairs. Suitable for curved structures, the industrial metal finish adds a striking contrast to the wood treads. The glass sides enhance light flow to create an open feel. **Max-Stairs metal staircase, from £16,800, max-stairs.co.uk**

product news

Great shopping ideas for your custom home project

DOWNDRAFT EXTRACTOR

Bring some modern flare to your kitchen with this space-saving solution. Featuring four speed settings and equipped with aluminium grease filters to prevent blockages, it's compatible with gas, ceramic, and induction cooktops. **Caple DD523BK extractor, £1,892.31, caple.co.uk**

LIGHTWEIGHT SCREED

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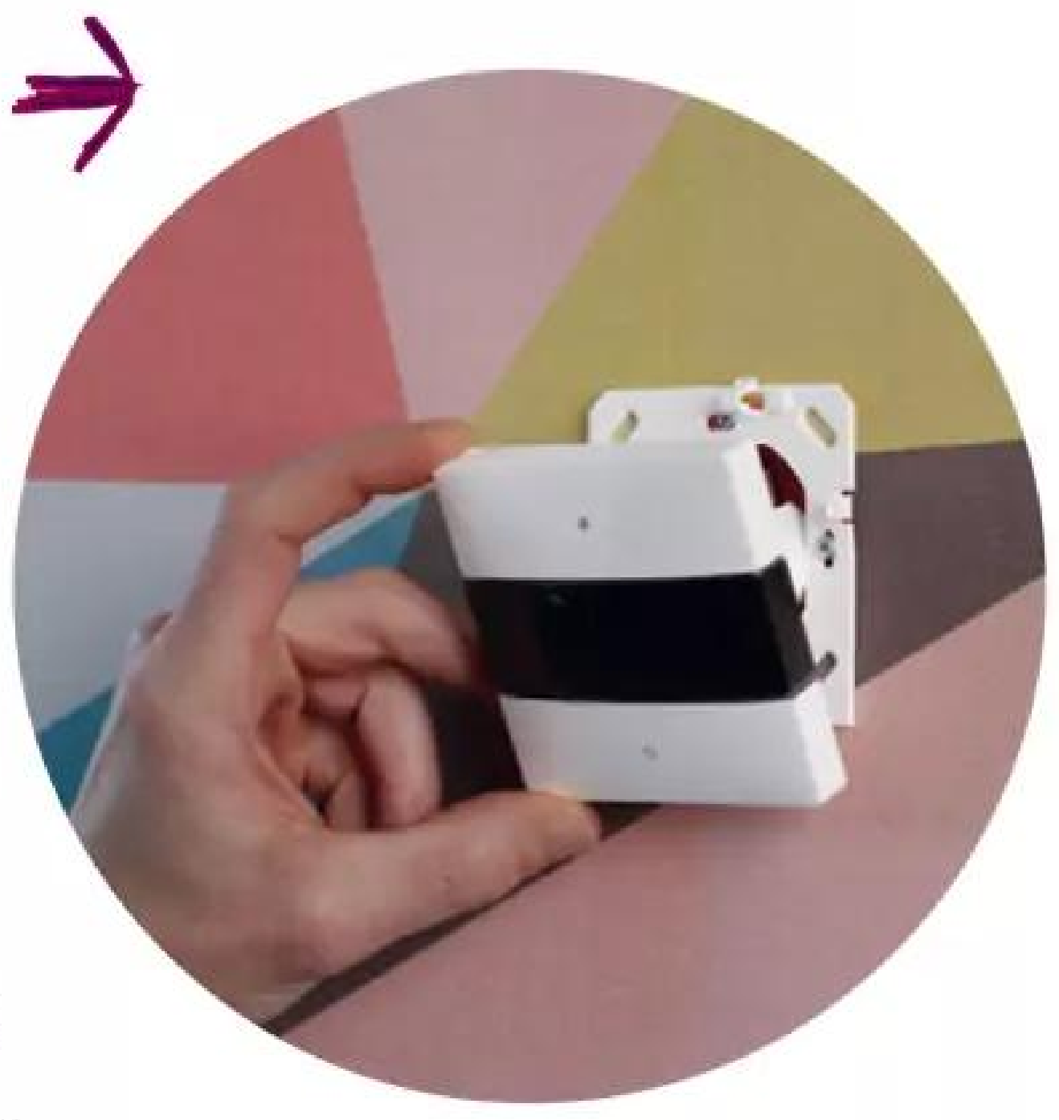
SMART CONTROL

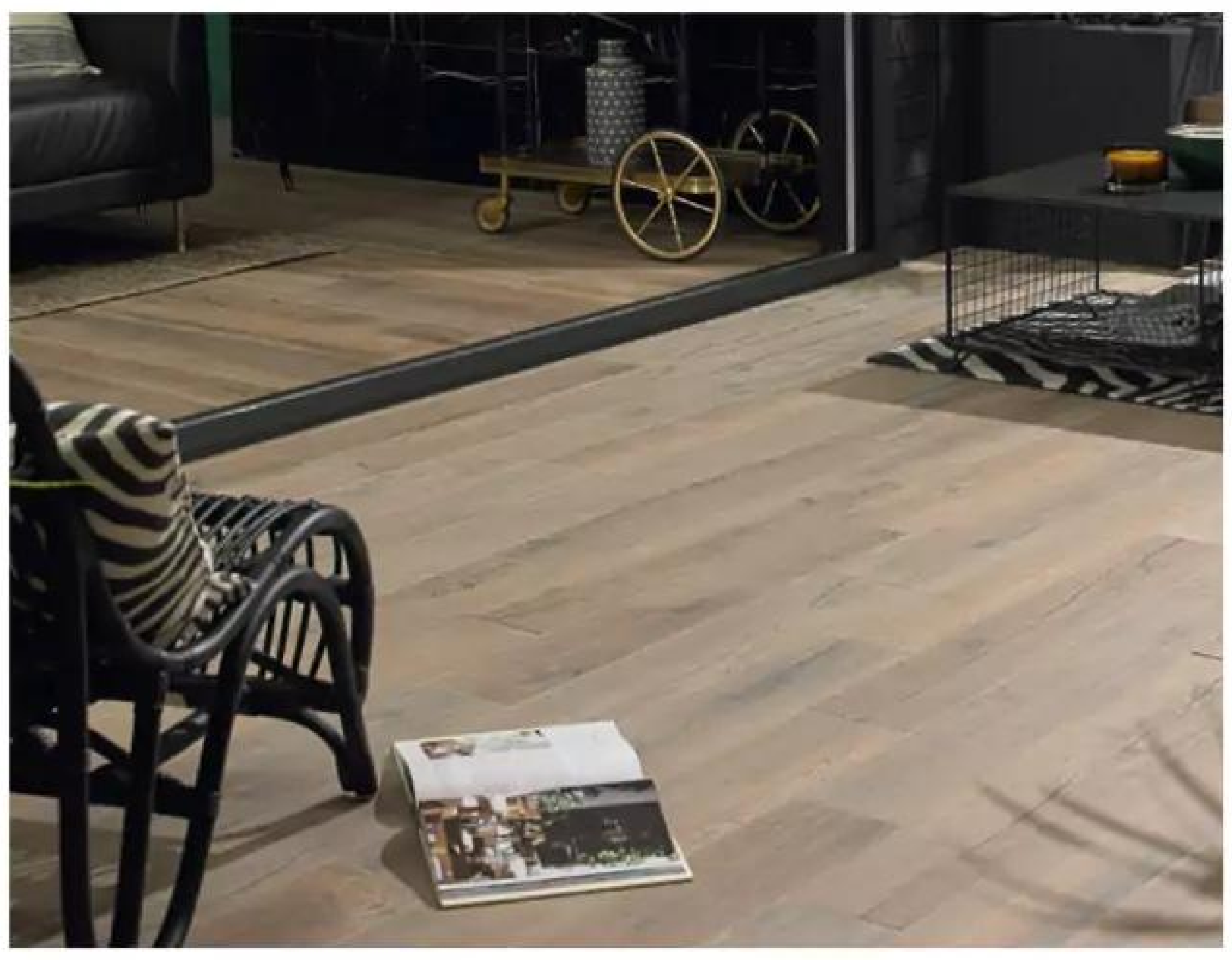


Transform your home extension with a smart home system created with simplicity and flexibility in mind. This wireless solution delivers seamless automation without the need for complex wiring. Control up to 30 essential functions all from one secure point. **LUXORliving Smart Start, £POA, luxorliving.co.uk**

NATURAL GARDEN SCREENS

These slatted pine screens offer an elegant and contemporary way to zone your garden. Whether you want to form dining spaces or to conceal unappealing aspects, these panels offer long-lasting performance, and are straightforward to install too. A great and budget-efficient way to enhance your exterior space. **Slatted screening panels, £150 for 3.6m, richardburbidge.com**

3 of the best INDOOR/OUTDOOR TILES



1 *Muniellos honey oak wood effect tiles,* **£41.95 per m^2, wallsandfloors.co.uk**

2 *Grange grey anti slip porcelain tiles,* **£39.95 per m^2, tilemountain.co.uk**

3 *Kingfisher sandstone paving in Mocha,* **£60.48 per m^2, hyperiontiles.co.uk**

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Discover more about Paul and Mandy's *self-build story*

Build It AWARDS 2024 WINNER Best Oak Frame Home

interiors notebook

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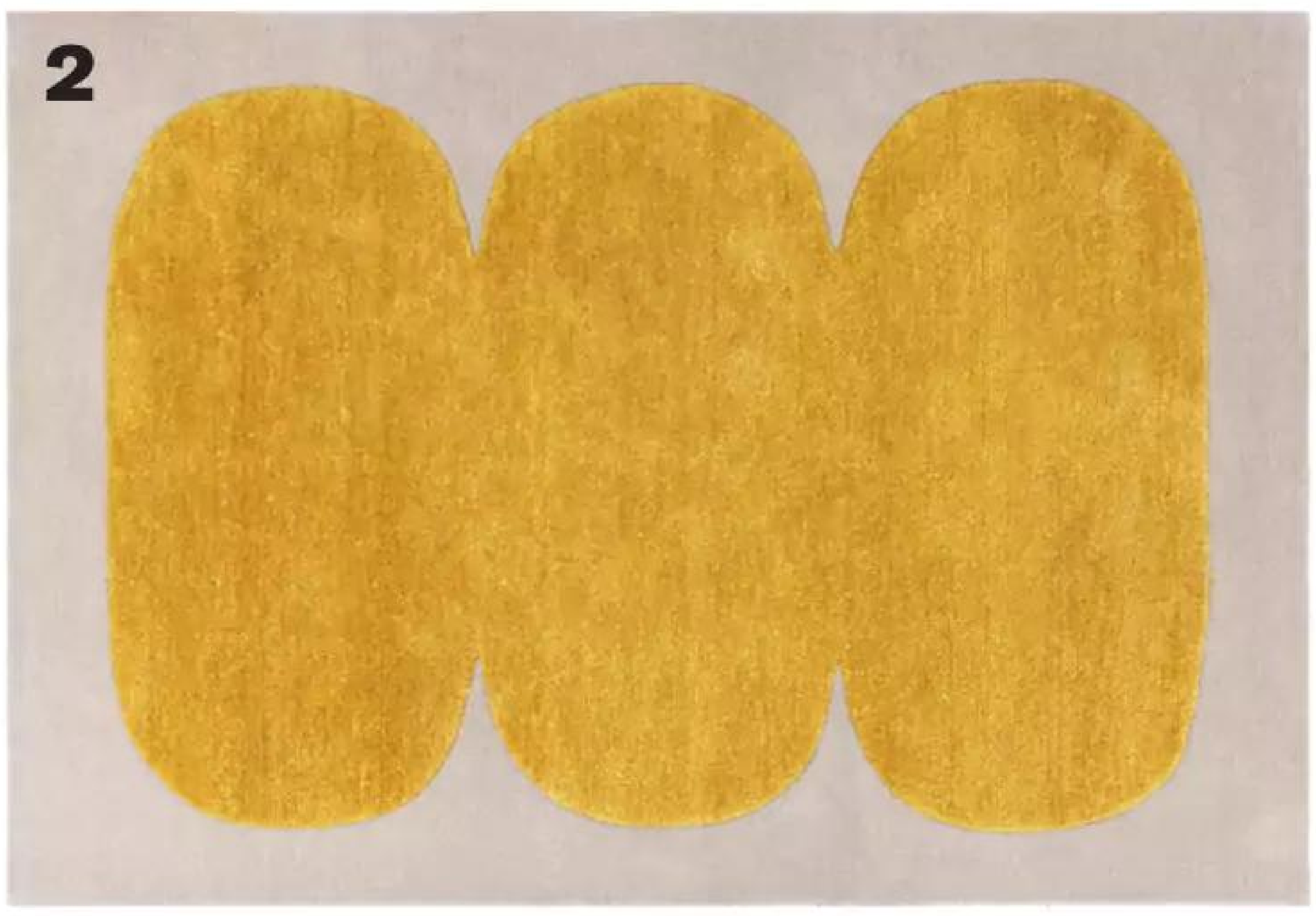
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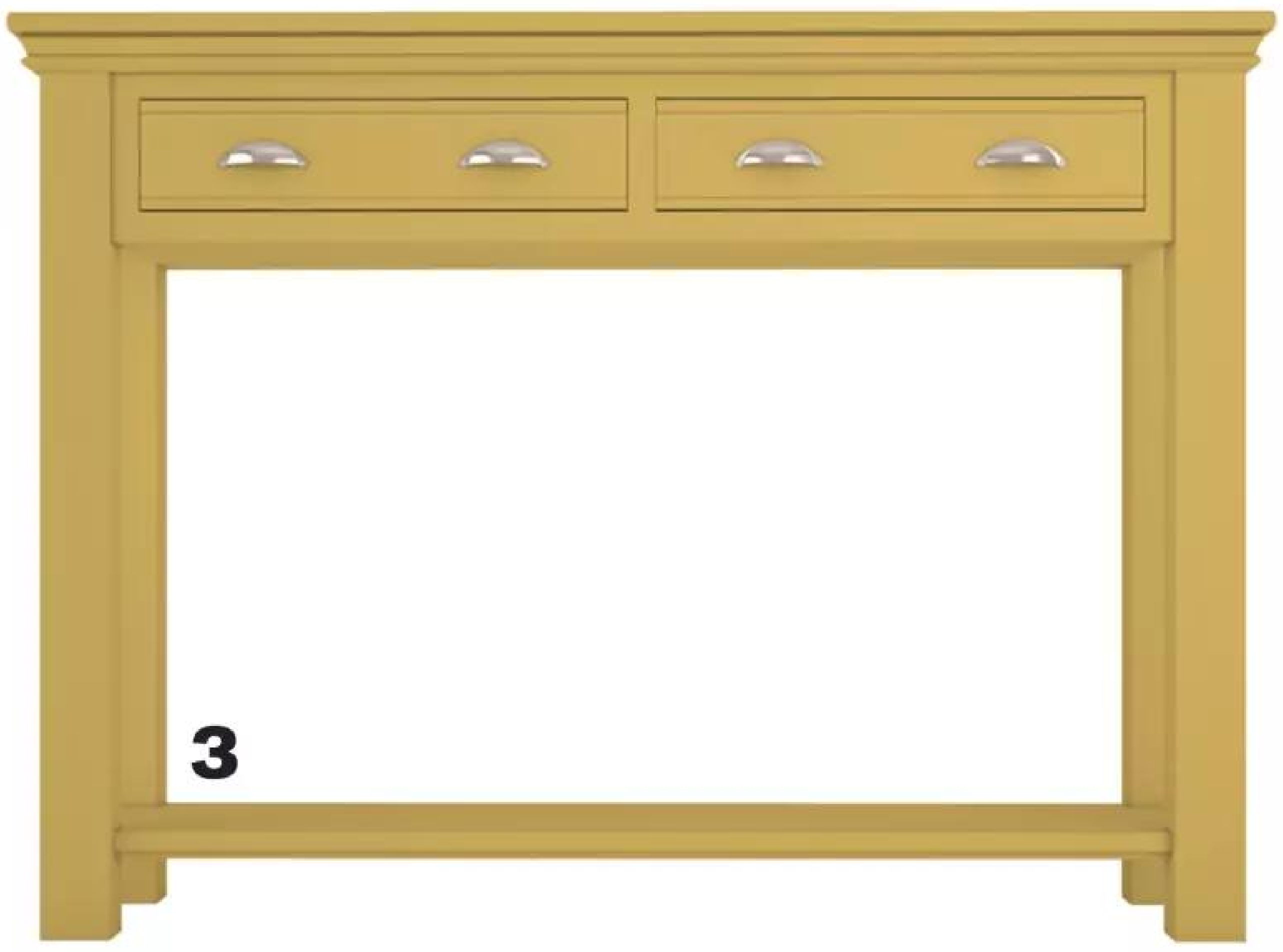
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Shopping list

1 *Create a stunning focal point in your bathroom with this freestanding tub. Its high ends support your neck and shoulders, ensuring a relaxing bathing experience.* **Milano Legend slipper bath in Honey Yellow, from £999.99, bigbathroomshop.co.uk**

2 *Elevate your living space with this beautiful statement rug. Hand-tufted from 100% wool, the modern design merges both chunky and refined yarn to add an extra layer of visual interest to your interiors. Choose from three sizes to suit your room.* **Canvas sculpt rug in Mustard, £278, limelace.co.uk**

3 *Thanks to its sleek design, this bold console table fits in beautifully in hallways, porches or sitting rooms. A nightstand version is also available to add a playful pop of colour to your bedroom.* **Island Breeze console table in Ciara Yellow, £725, painted furnitureco.co.uk**

4 *This bright, breathable, ultra matt paint will both soften and enhance the light in your home. The rich, ochre tones are derived directly from the natural, eco-friendly pigments that are used to create this luxurious paint.* **Claypaint in Humpty Dumpty, £60 for 2.5L, earthborn paints.co.uk**

5 *Taking a chic twist on a classic style, this cosy chair features two shorter legs at the back to enhance comfort. Add in the plush cushions and it becomes the perfect spot to relax in. It also comes with a 10-year guarantee, too.* **Squisharoo armchair in Lemon Posset, £1,295, loaf.com**

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ASK OUR EXPERTS

TOP TIPS FINDING LAND

Build It Live offers you firsthand experience of how products and materials look and feel, while connecting with experts to guide your specification choices for your project. If you are self building, renovating or have a home improvement in the pipeline, join Build It's knowledgeable team and hundreds of trusted suppliers. Take the next step in your journey towards your dream home at the event, which takes place at Bicester Motion in Oxfordshire, on 6th & 7th June. Alongside the chance to explore 1,000s of products and materials, Build It Live offers free expert seminars, workshops and live demonstrations, designed to help you achieve project success. Here's a taster of what's in store:

Ask Our Experts

Build It's experts will be available all weekend to offer FREE, impartial advice on every aspect of your self build, renovation or extension – no sales pitch, just expert guidance! Don't miss this chance to benefit from the knowledge and experience of professional project managers, planners, architects, sustainability specialists, and more. Their independent advice could save you thousands in consultancy fees! Bring along your plans, ideas and questions – get there early to secure your one-on-one appointment.

FREE & IMPARTIAL PROJECT ADVICE!

Build Cost Clinic

Looking to get a handle on budgeting for your self build, renovation, or extension project? Visit the Build Cost Clinic to book an initial consultation with a qualified and experienced estimator. They'll provide expert insights on the budget you need to bring your dream home to life. Using up-to-date materials and labour pricing, their advice will help you refine your design choices, better evaluate builders' quotes, and potentially save you money in the process!

Extensions Clinic

Get the answers you need to maximise your budget and add space, value and wow factor to your home at our dedicated Extensions Clinic. From planning advice to design inspiration, key specification choices and tips on getting the best value for your investment, our team of CIAT-certified architectural technologists is here to guide you. They'll help you navigate the home extension process and identify the best strategies to achieve your goals with confidence.

Heating Advice Clinic

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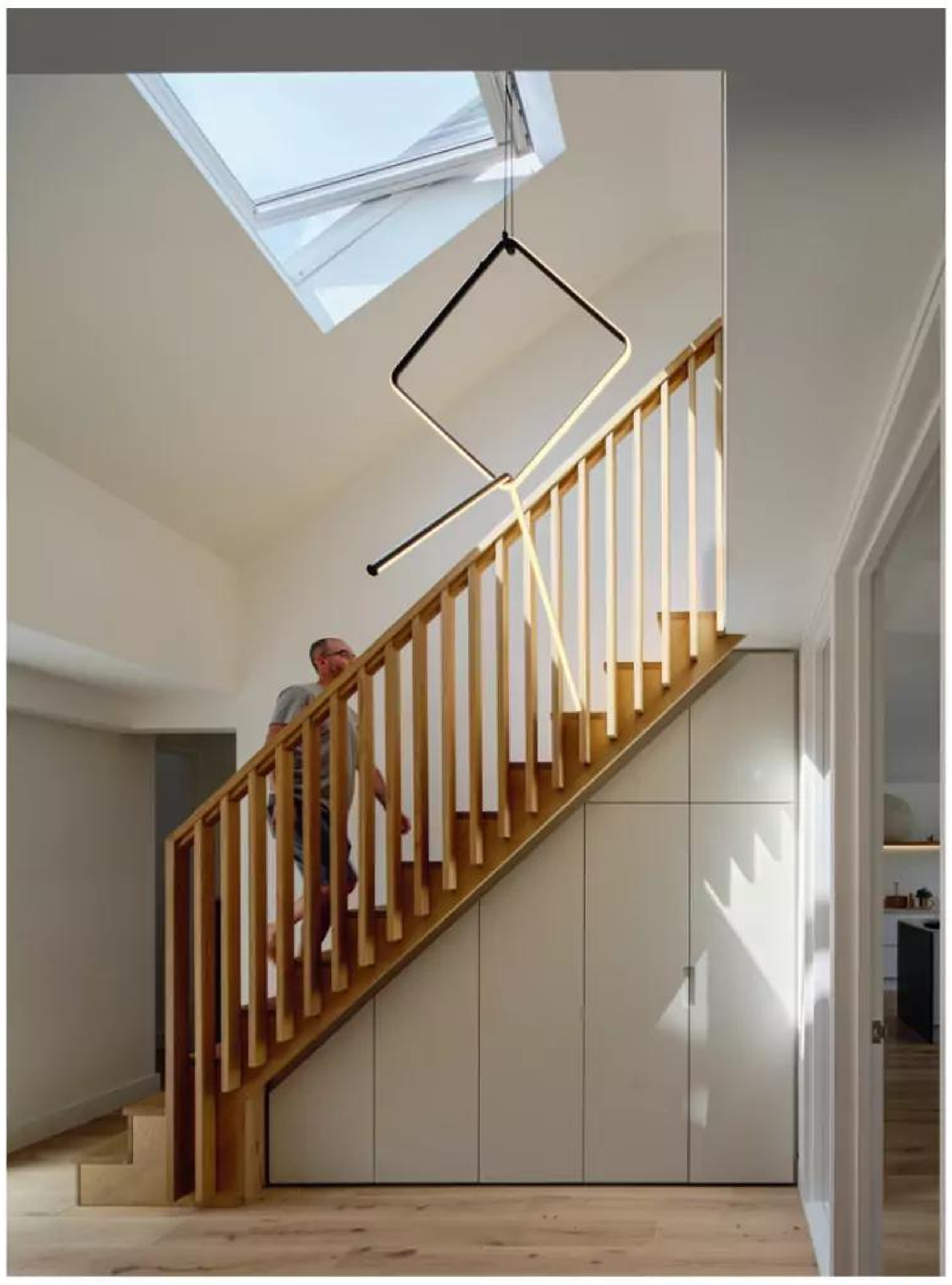
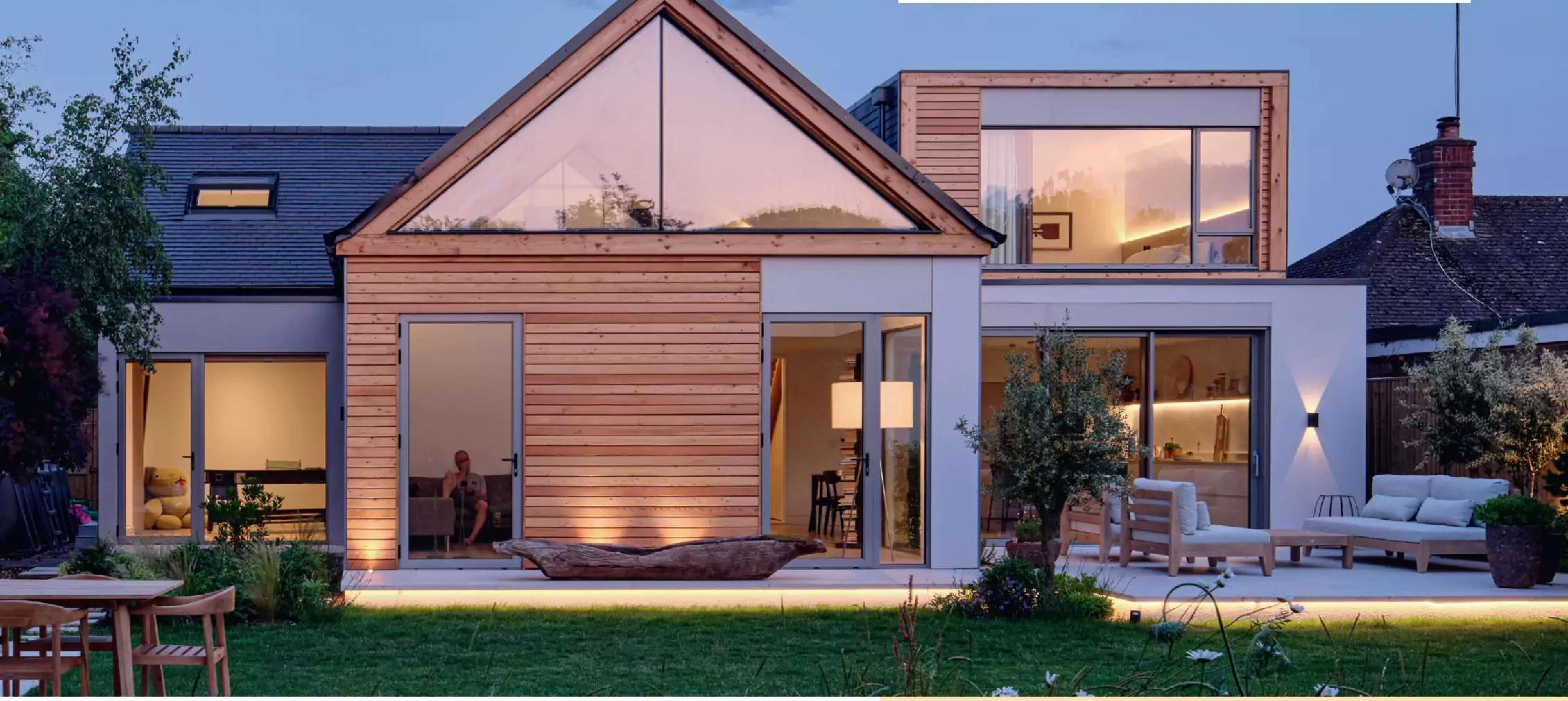
FANTASTIC BUNGALOW RENOVATIONS

Sander Tel speaks to the experts about how to develop a successful scheme and uncovers a collection of inspiring projects, showcasing the versatility and design potential of single-storey homes

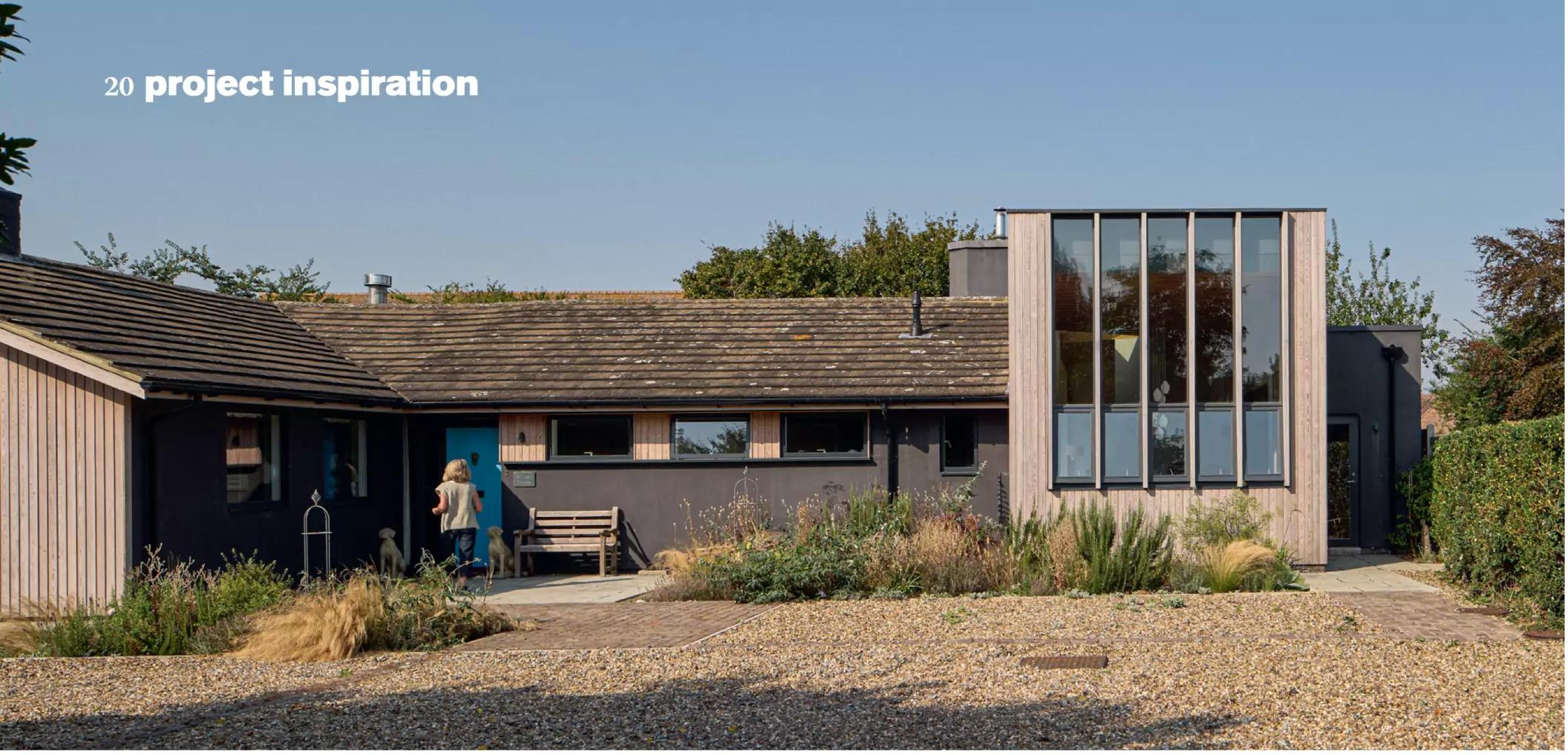


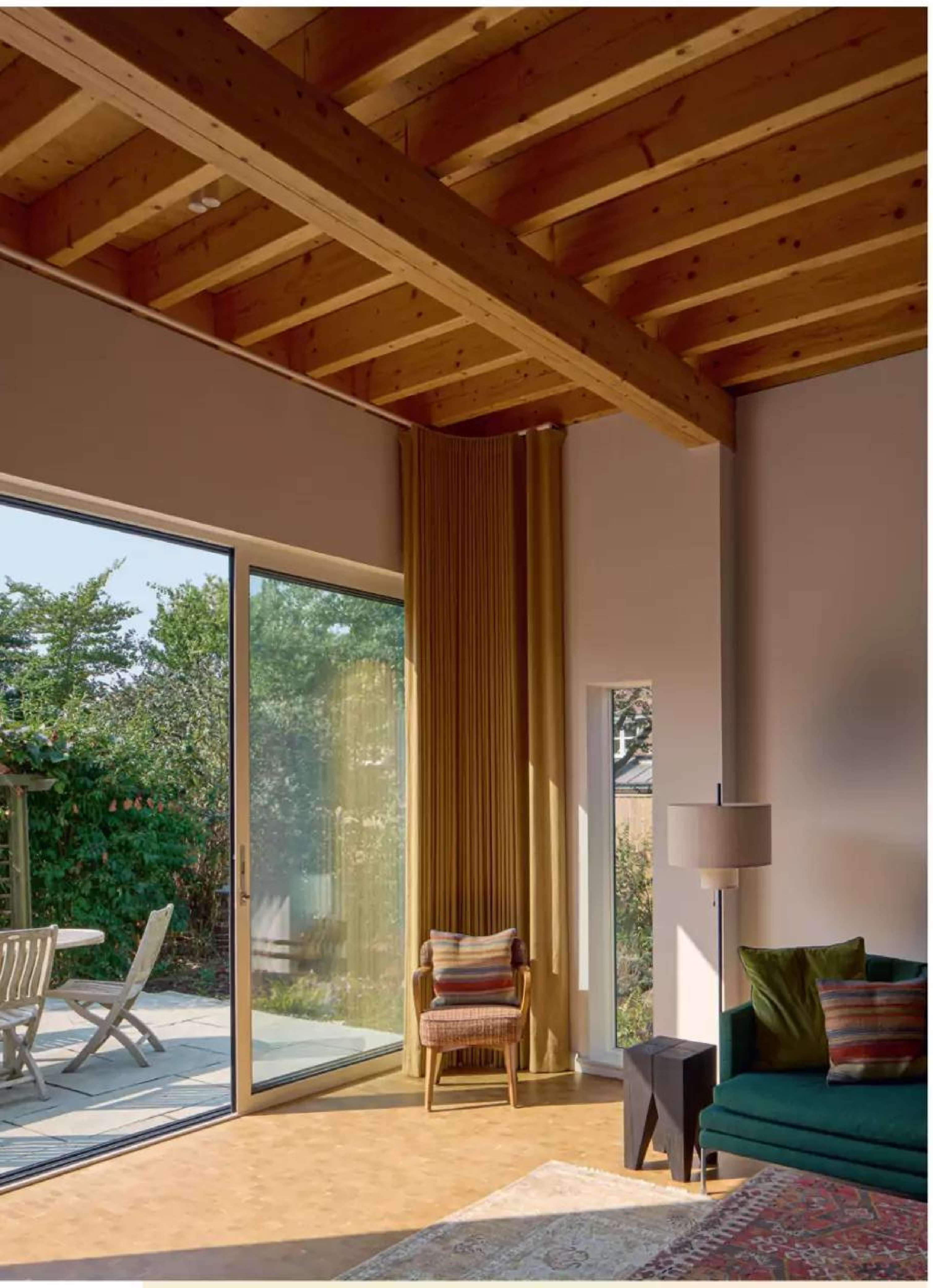


SIMON KENNEDY

DOUBLING UP

Nestled into a cul-de-sac in South West London, this once-vacant 1960s bungalow has been extended and renovated to create an open-plan, efficient family home. The new owner, desperate for more space, approached Sophie Bates Architects, who helped draw up a scheme that would double the property's floorspace, while respecting the surrounding single-storey houses. The project involved converting the garage, adding a two-storey side extension and a dormer loft space. A new, double-height living area on the ground floor is flooded with natural light via a glazed gable end. The property has also been upgraded with internal floor and wall insulation, an air source heat pump and a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (MVHR) system, ensuring a healthy living environment with low running costs all year round. **(www.sophiebates.com)**

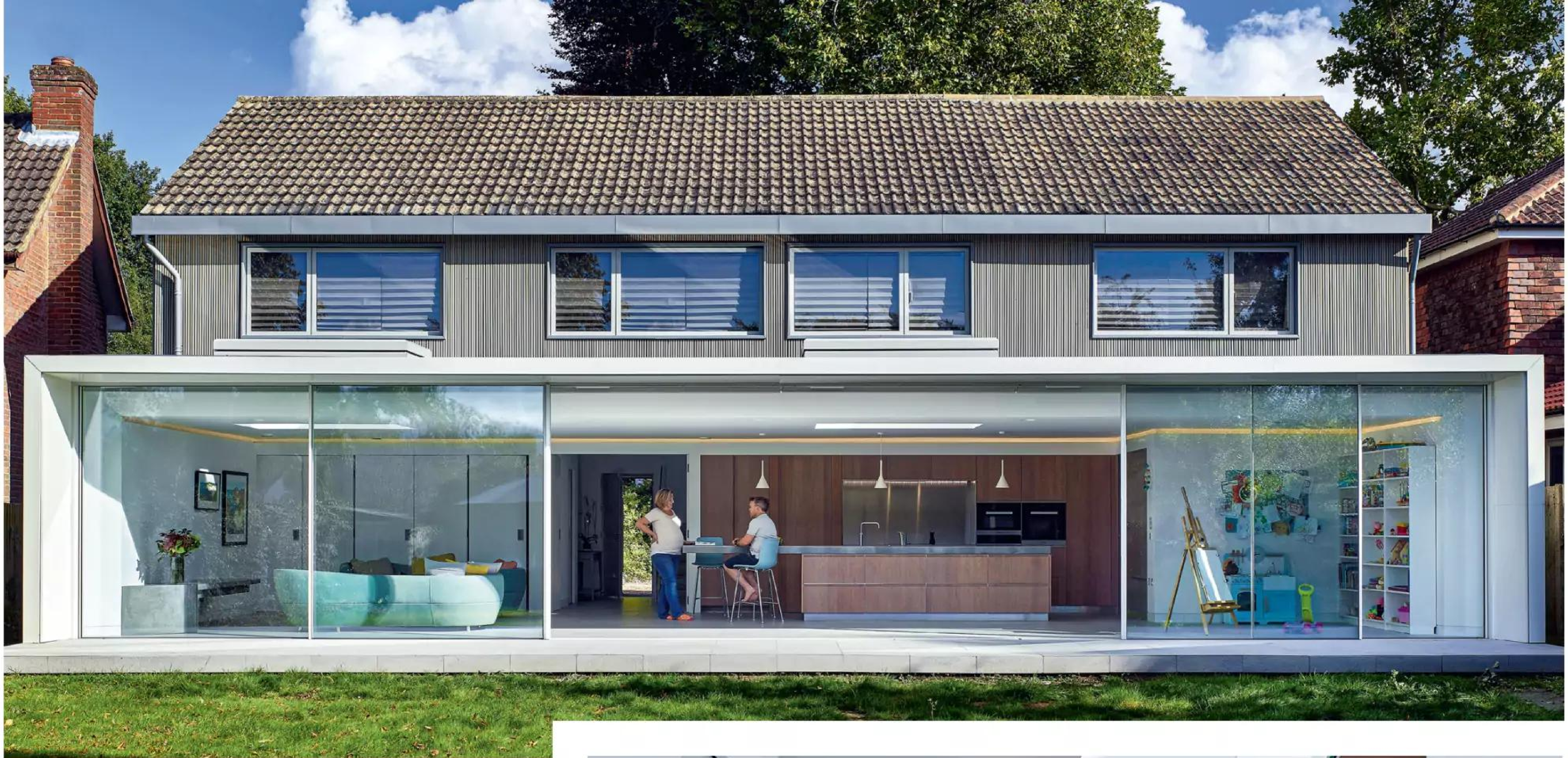




NICK GUTTRIDGE

GAINING PERSPECTIVE

Masterminded by Mole Architects, this bungalow extension and renovation in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, has completely transformed a tired building into a spectacular home. The existing single-storey house was poorly arranged, with the living spaces tucked into one end and blocked off from sunlight by a double garage. Named Stones Throw, the house now looks back to the sea from a new, double-height space, which is connected to the outdoors via a set of IDSystems sliding doors. The extension has been finished with Russwood's cedar cladding; a sympathetic exterior facade option that blends seamlessly with the coastal architecture. **(www.molearchitects.co.uk, www.idsystems.co.uk, www.russwood.co.uk)**



A WELCOME CHANGE

Paul Archer Design has breathed new life into this once-tired bungalow with a full renovation and an expansive, 14.5m open-plan extension. Having lived in the property since 2013, the homeowners wanted more space and natural light. They worked closely with the architects to develop the resulting, family-friendly scheme. The main structure has been extended at first floor level and above the garage. A stained, cedar-clad exterior makes a modern statement, with the bathroom window obscured behind the batons for privacy. Inside, the ceiling of the extended first floor follows the pitch of the roof, creating a lofty, open living space. **(www.paularcherdesign.co.uk)**

KILLIAN O'SULLIVAN

EXPERT VIEW BUNGALOW RENOVATION CONSIDERATIONS

SOPHIE BATES, director at Sophie Bates Architects, answers your top bungalow renovation FAQs

Q What do I need to consider if I want to create an open-plan space?

Knocking down internal walls to create open-plan living spaces will require you to install new structural beams in the ceiling for additional support. If you want to maximise headroom, locate these in the loft floor zone to achieve a flat ceiling. You will need a designer and a structural engineer to prepare the plans and submit these to building control for approval.

When designing an open-plan zone, especially as part of a bungalow renovation, it's important to consider the existing layout and rooms that may be cut off from natural light – such as those in the centre of the floorplan. Position storage rooms, utility spaces and downstairs WCs in the middle of the house, allowing the rooms you will spend most of your time in to have better access to natural light and views of the garden.

Our Richmond project (head to page 19) features a large, open space to the rear, with wide spans of glazing to ensure the living areas have good access to daylight.

Q How can I improve my bungalow's thermal efficiency?

Adding insulation is key to a warm, thermally-efficient home. This could be cavity insulation to the walls or solid wall insulation (internal or external). External insulation will change the appearance of the house, while internal insulation will compromise some of your floorspace, but both can provide excellent thermal performance. Use the most effective floor insulation you can afford to reduce the required thickness, as this will retain as much floor-to-ceiling height as possible.

Double or triple-glazed windows and doors will help to minimise heat loss and boost your home's efficiency. You should also think about solar panels, paired with battery storage, so you can access cheap electricity from the grid at night and store excess energy on sunny days.

Q What do I need to consider before commencing the building work?

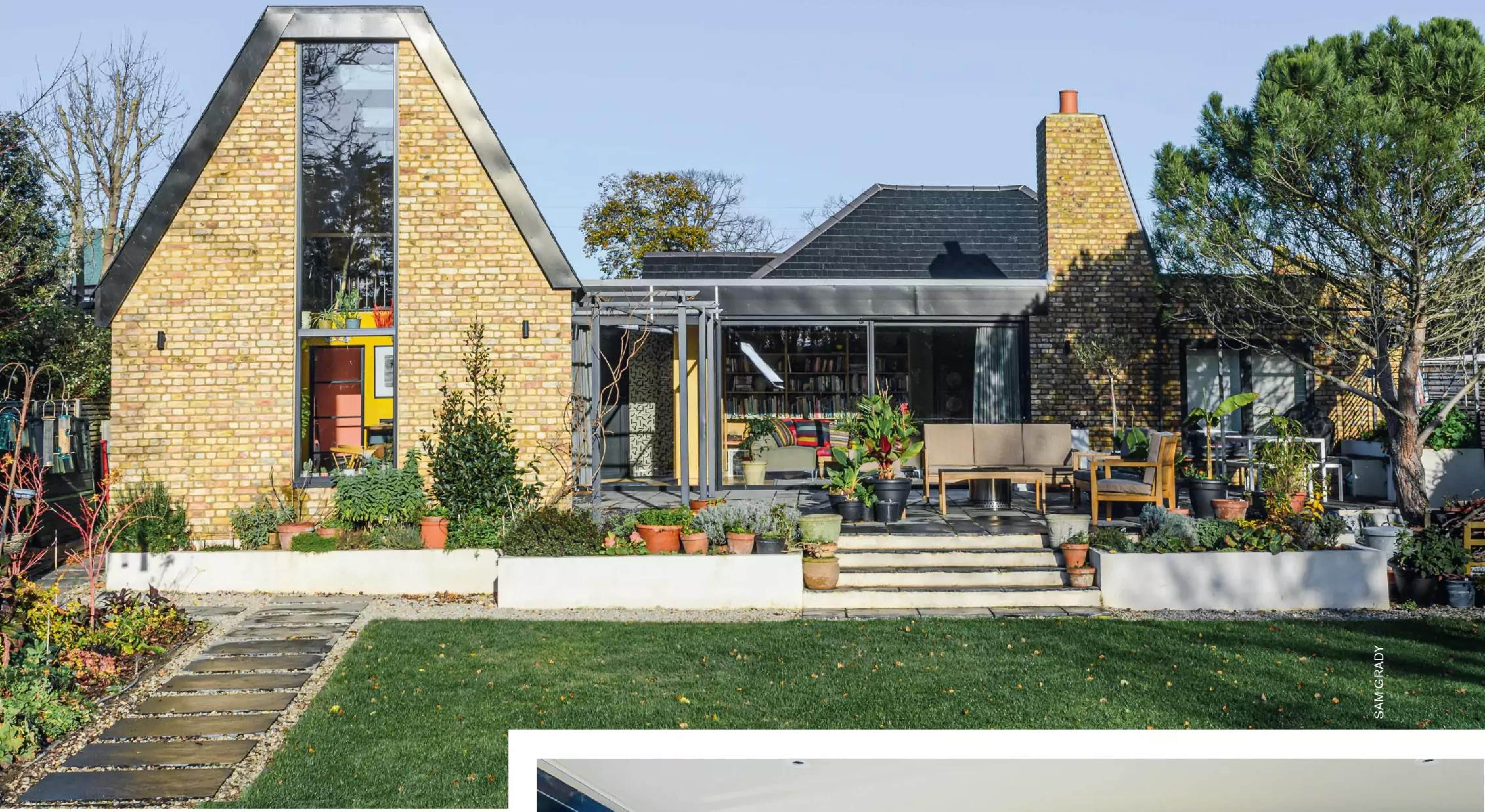
Before you start any work on site, make sure you have an asbestos survey carried out, as many bungalows were built in the 60s when it was commonly used. Knowing if there is any asbestos before you begin will allow you to budget for its removal in advance and avoid costly delays if the builders discover it later on.

Q How can I modernise my bungalow's exterior as part of a renovation?

Upgrading your bungalow's exterior cladding while addressing external insulation will simultaneously improve the home's kerb appeal and thermal performance. Consider tall, floor-to-ceiling glass doors and large windows to enhance the home's relationship with the outdoors, improve access to natural light and create a sense of space. External artificial lighting features can make a charming addition to the house's exterior facade and garden, creating an atmosphere in the evening.

Q What's the best way to add value to a single-storey home?

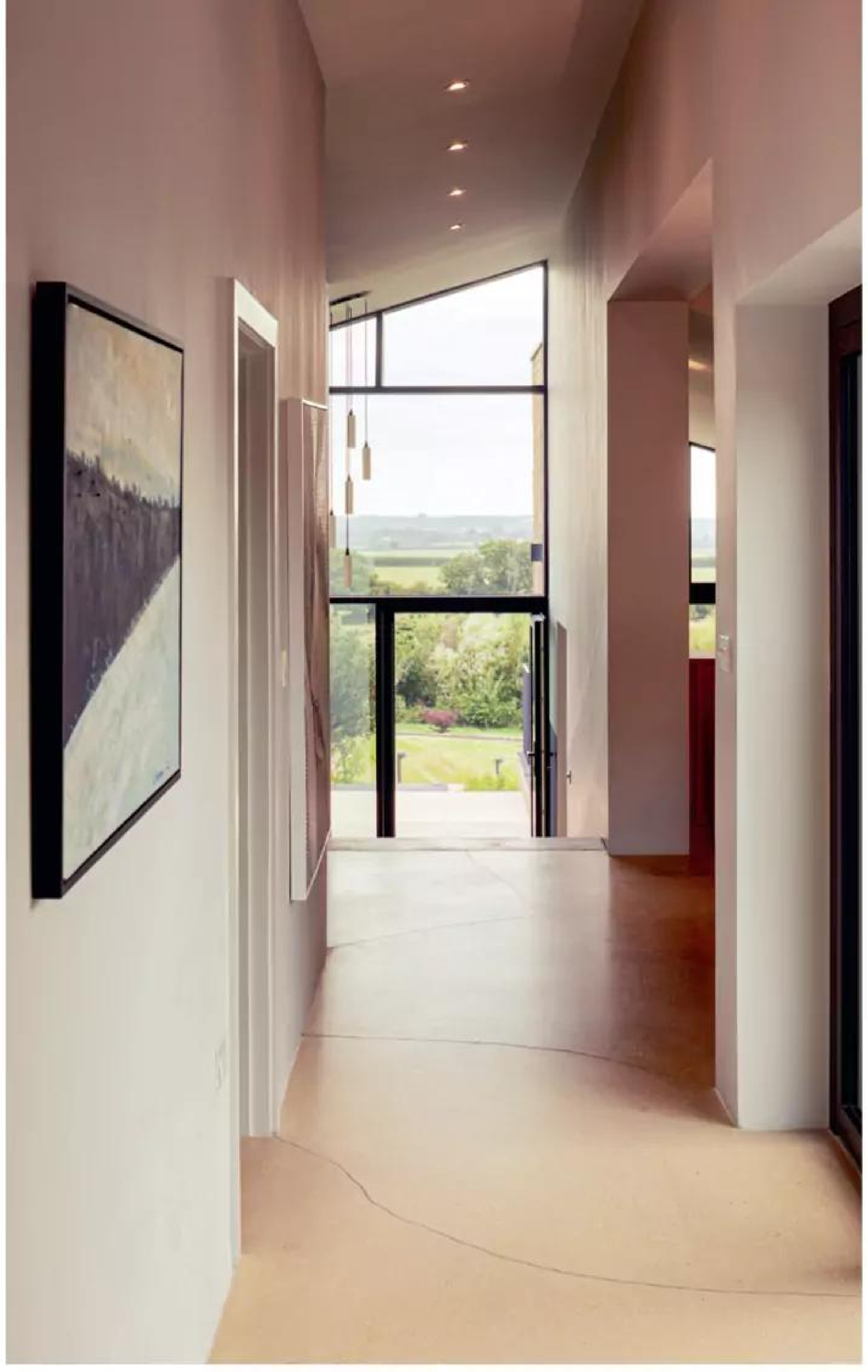
Bungalows have huge potential and make great renovation and extension projects. Often situated on wide plots, you can extend to the rear and up into the roof space to create additional bedrooms, bathrooms and more. Bungalows are not usually situated in conservation areas, which means you will typically benefit from permitted development (PD) rights when making any upgrades. You may also want to convert the garage, extend it or add an extra storey on top, or if you are lucky enough to find a wide corner plot, building out to the side to create new living space will also be extremely beneficial.

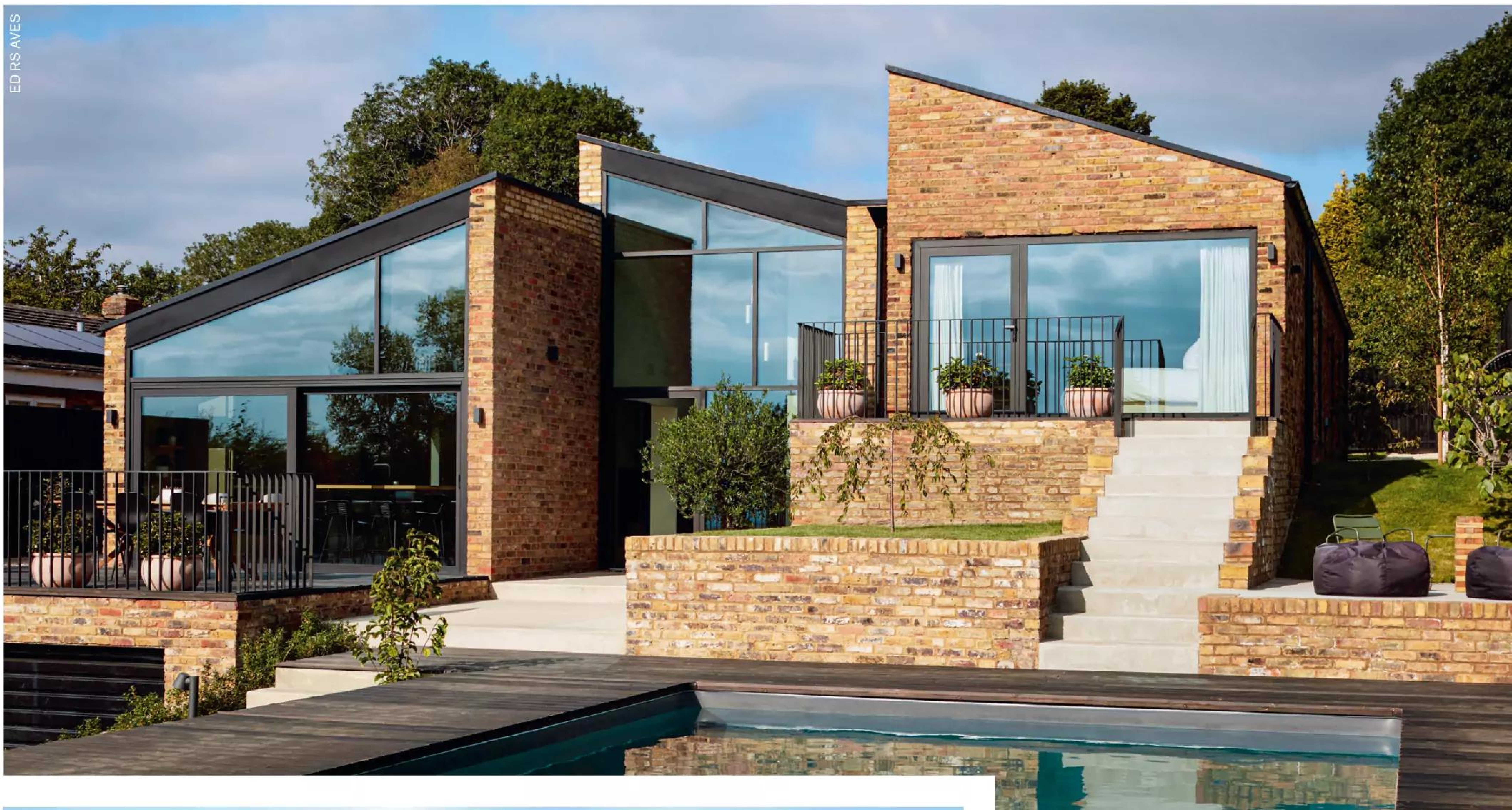


SAM GRADY

BRIGHT IDEA

This 1930s bungalow has been reimagined with a striking extension and complete renovation, devised by Meme Architects. Designed for a textile designer and rugmaker, creativity sits at the core of the scheme, which comprises a double-height, L-shaped addition with floor-to-ceiling glazing, creating an open-plan space flooded with natural light. The interior is bright and colourful, incorporating bespoke joinery to display the clients' own designs, eclectic artworks and ceramics collection, making a home that reflects the personalities of its owners. **(www.memearchitects.co.uk)**

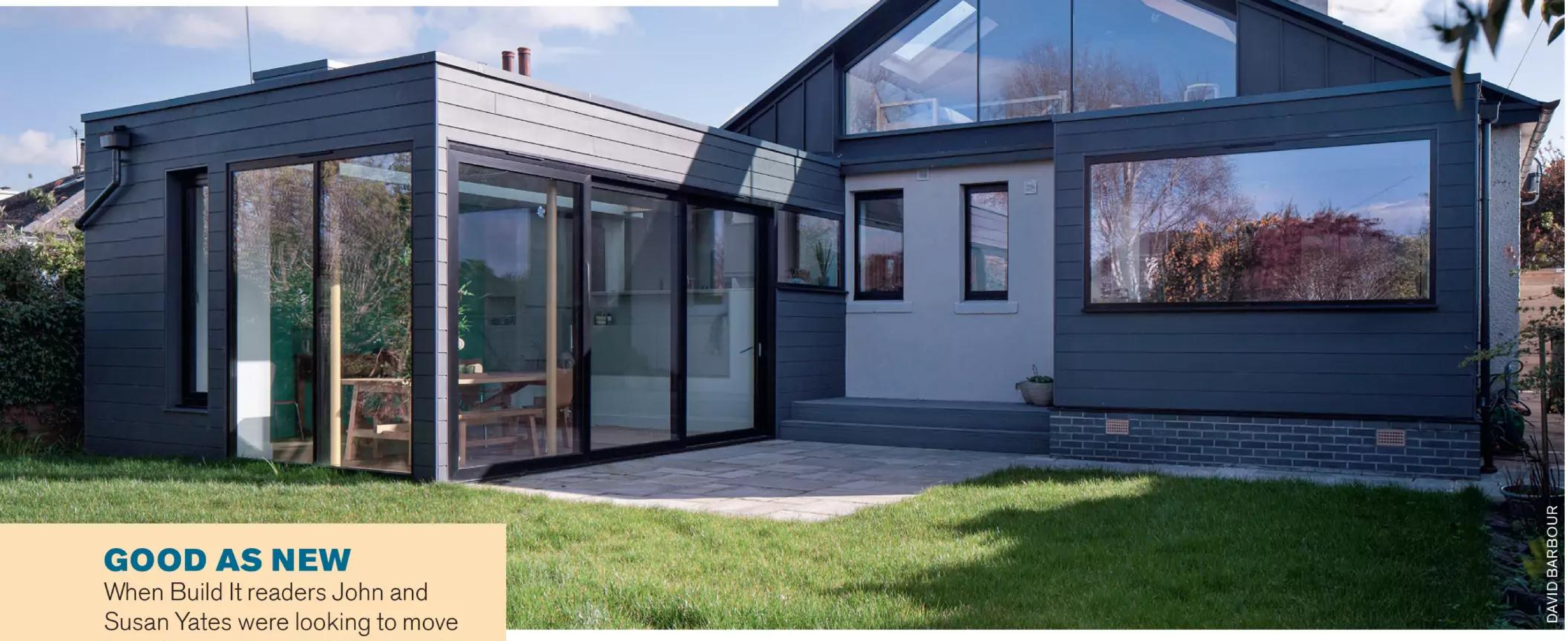




ED RS AVES

SHEDDING LIGHT

Charlie Luxton Design remodelled and refurbished this mid-century modern bungalow on the edge of a village in Buckinghamshire. Working with the existing building's fabric, the internal layout was rearranged to open up the spaces and improve the connection to the terraced garden and surrounding countryside views. The renovation is characterised by three peaked, multi-level structures, which each make use of wide spans of glazing to fill the interiors with natural light. **(www.charlieluxtondesign.com)**



DAVID BARBOUR

GOOD AS NEW

When Build It readers John and Susan Yates were looking to move from the west coast of Scotland to Edinburgh, their initial plan was to find a flat in the city centre. However, they became inspired by a bungalow that was under renovation works in the coastal town of Portobello. With the help of Chambers McMillan architects, the couple completely transformed this traditional, single-storey building with a modern, light-filled, zinc-clad extension, expansive glazing and a contemporary interior scheme. To make maximum use of solar gain throughout the day, the roof was converted into a living area with a glazed gable and overhead windows, rather than a bedroom. (Chambers McMillan has now evolved into two practices: Studio McMillan Architects **www.studiomcmillan.com**, and Mind the Gap Inclusive Design Consultancy **www.mind-the-gap.space**)

EXPERT VIEW EXTENDING A BUNGALOW

MEREDITH BOWLES, **director at Mole Architects, takes a look at the different options and considerations to note when adding space**

Q Should I extend to the rear?

It all depends! If you have a side area that's poorly used, or a large front garden and a small back yard, it might make sense to extend into the excess space. Something to be aware of, especially when extending the ground floor of a bungalow, is creating dark, unappealing areas in the middle of the floorplan due to cutting off natural light. Any addition should try to avoid this through good use of available space.

Q Should I add an extra storey with a loft conversion and extension?

A loft conversion tends to be the most logical project when upgrading a bungalow, as you're repurposing existing space, without having to pay for new foundations and a new roof. A loft conversion will add significant value to the home, too. Just consider available headroom inside the zone and whether or not you'll require a dormer extension in addition to the conversion. You will also need to factor fire safety into the design.

While extending or converting the loft, you may be able to upgrade the home's existing roof insulation to improve its thermal performance. If you have to scaffold the house, it would be a good time to think about external maintenance or even solar panels if they're a viable option.

Q When do I need planning permission to extend a bungalow?

You can build quite substantial single-storey extensions to a house without needing planning approval, under permitted development (PD), although the rules as to what you can and can't do are quite detailed. Building to the front of the house is generally not allowed under PD, and building close to the boundary is only possible under certain circumstances. You will always need to apply for planning permission if you are in a designated area or if your bungalow is listed.

Q How much should I budget for a bungalow extension?

Costs are always difficult to estimate when dealing with an existing building, as the work required to the home will vary. Generally, if it's in good condition, it will be cheaper to extend. A standard extension spec will include a brick and block structure, PVCu windows and doors, and concrete roof tiles. To build an interesting, non-standard extension that features elements such as exposed beams, high levels of insulation, large windows, and energy-saving tech, will likely cost double. Allow somewhere between **£2,500 and £4,500 per m^2** for the extension (from basic to architecturally interesting), plus whatever renovation work you are doing to the existing house. Our Stones Throw project (featured on page 20) involved a complete renovation and extension. The original 140m^2 bungalow was refurbished and we added a 75m^2 extension. The project cost a total of **£425,000**.

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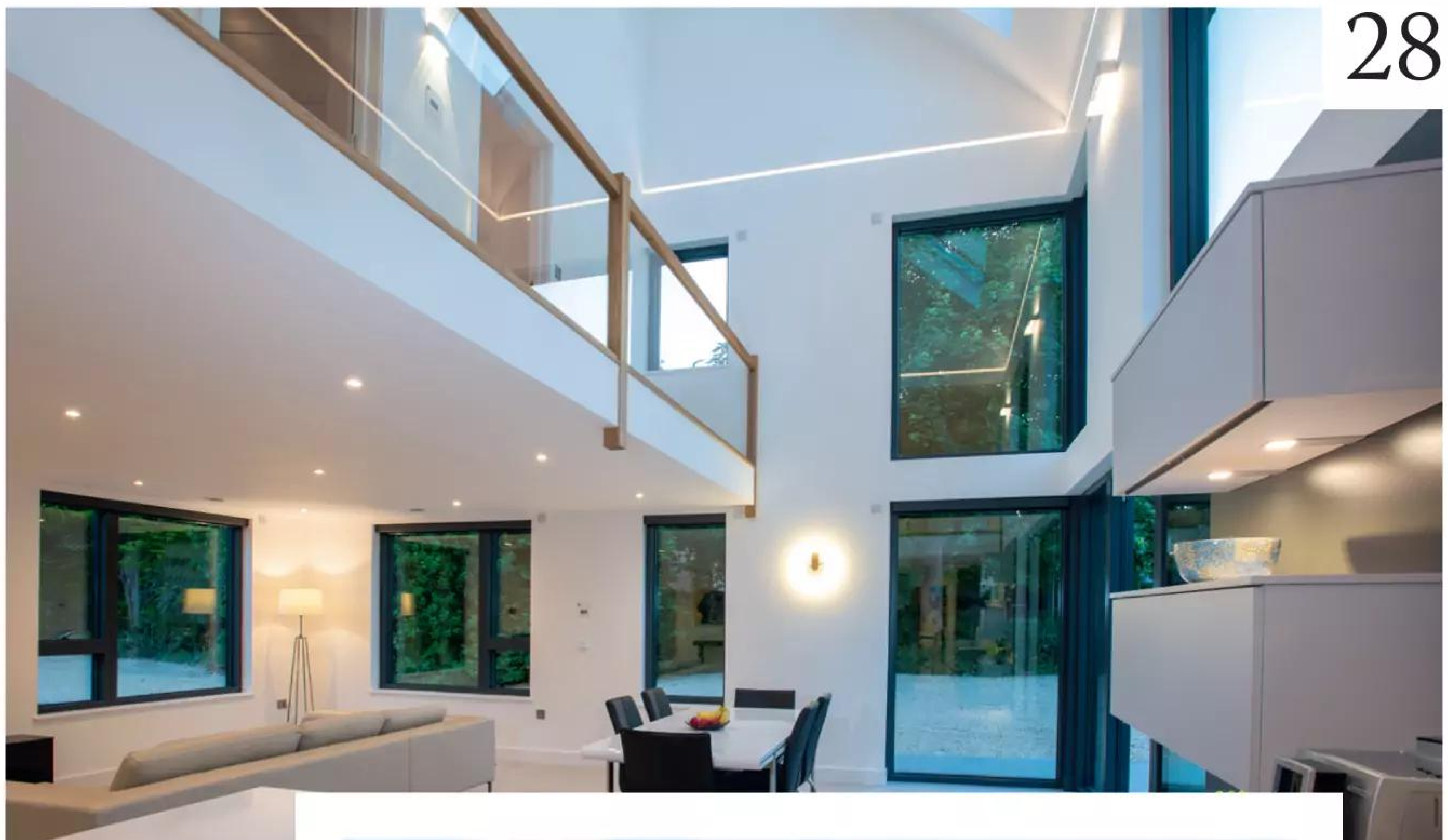
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38

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28 OUT WITH THE OLD

Struggling with its poor insulation, Vincent Denecker replaced his traditional brick house in Oxfordshire with a breathtaking, energy-efficient timber frame dwelling

38 DESIGNED TO IMPRESS

Mike and Karuna Wood renovated and extended their property in North London to fulfil their dream of creating a bespoke home that's tailored to their contemporary lifestyle

46 HOME STRETCH

Experienced self builders Christine and Robert Stewart dove headfirst into converting a church hall in the beautiful Scottish Borders, turning it into a playful, modern home that is full of character

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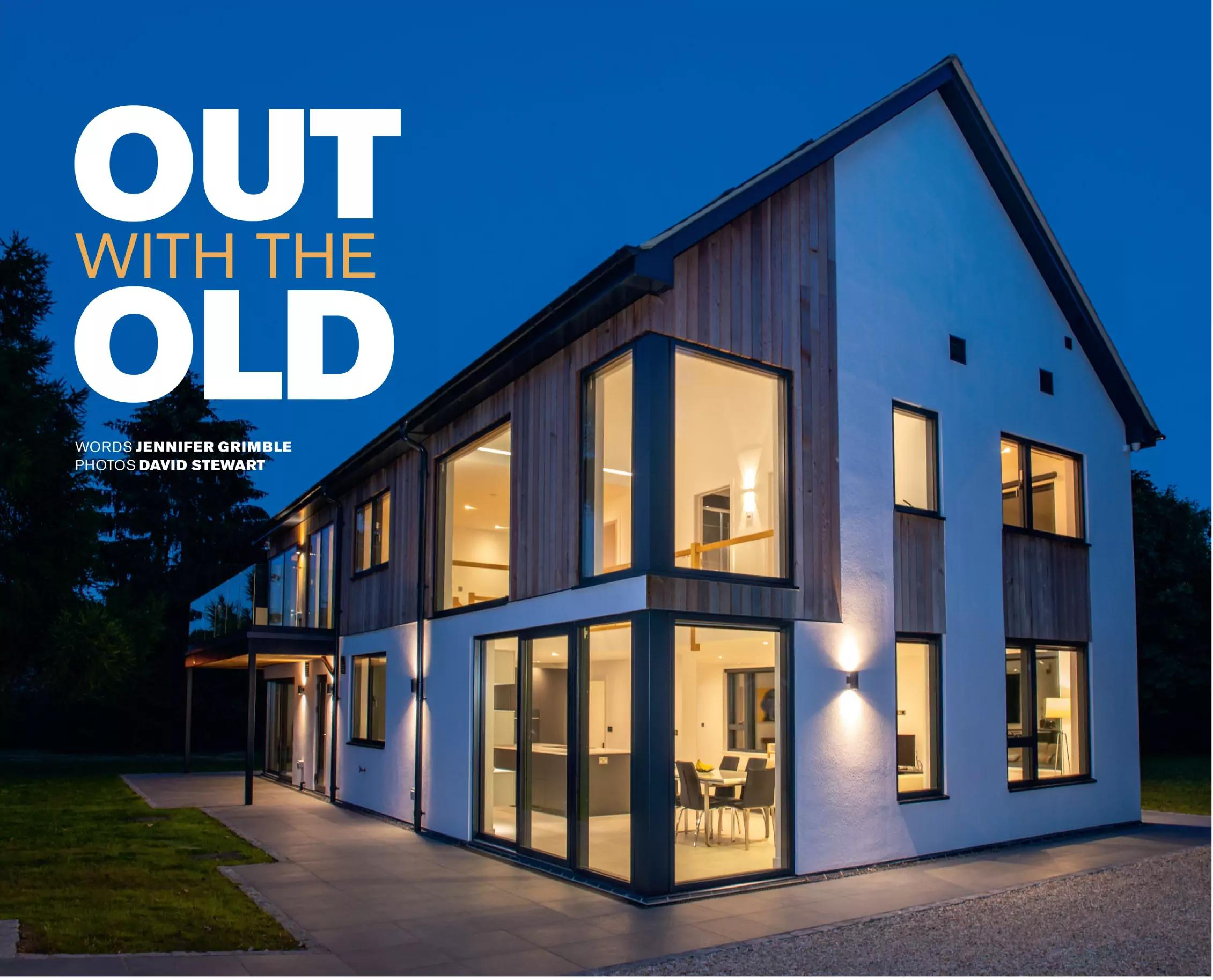
OUT WITH THE OLD



WORDS **JENNIFER GRIMBLE**
PHOTOS **DAVID STEWART**

Vincent Denecker's old brick house proved difficult and expensive to heat, so after years of contemplating a project, he replaced it with a contemporary, energy-efficient timber home

Although Vincent Denecker enjoyed his time in his brick-built house in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, having purchased the property in 1995, he found himself craving more space and comfort as the years rolled on. "It was a nice property, but very dated," he says. "It was built in the 1930s, so had poor insulation and was difficult to heat. It was always too hot in summer and too cold in winter. But it had a spacious garden and was in a nice area."

Vincent considered improving the property and even applied for planning permission to extend it in 2010. "I realised it was too much of a compromise because the home's issues would still have been there," he explains. Time passed; Vincent retired and, before too long, the Coronavirus pandemic hit. "I suddenly had nothing to do and realised it was the perfect time to focus on the project," he says. "After a lot of online research, I thought my best option was to demolish my house and build something new in its place."

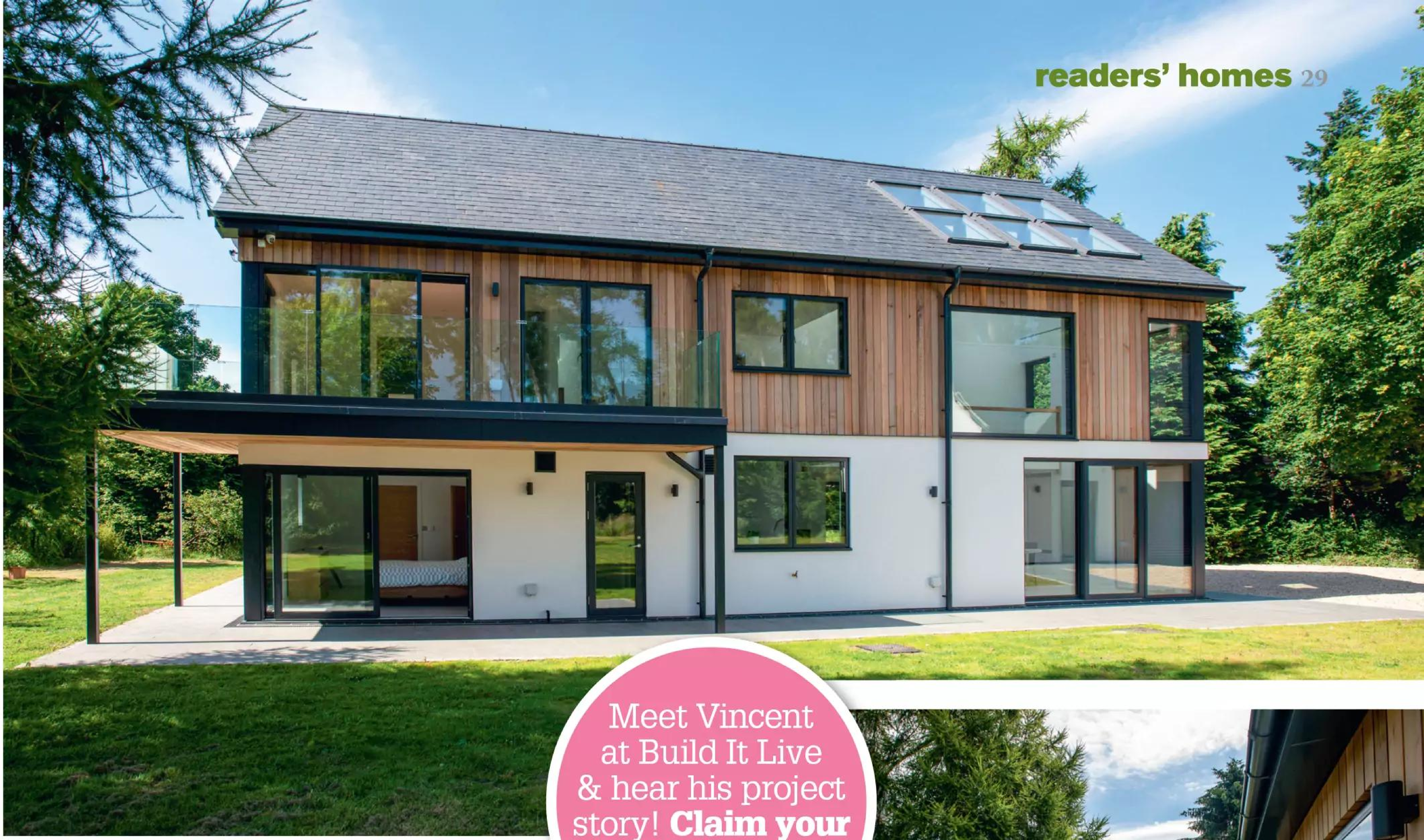
To gain more inspiration, Vincent visited The National Self Build and Renovation Centre (NSBRC) in Swindon. It was there he spotted a stand showcasing the work of Lapd Architects, who happened to also be based in Abingdon. "I visited their website and saw their previous projects. I read lots of positive feedback," says Vincent. "So, I reached out to them and had my first meeting with architect Opinder Liddar in September 2020. He suggested I put together a mood board of ideas."

Vincent requested a modern home with clean lines, plenty of natural light and excellent energy efficiency. "I wanted to use timber frame because it's quick to assemble and the shell provides fantastic thermal and airtight properties," he says. "I gave Opinder pointers and he came back with the first proposal. It looked good, but we did a few more design tweaks until I was completely happy."

Bats, gas & landfill

The final design was for a spacious, contemporary timber frame property, finished with acrylic render and Siberian larch accents. Sleek steel frame windows, charcoal-hued guttering and a slate roof would complete the exterior palette of materials.

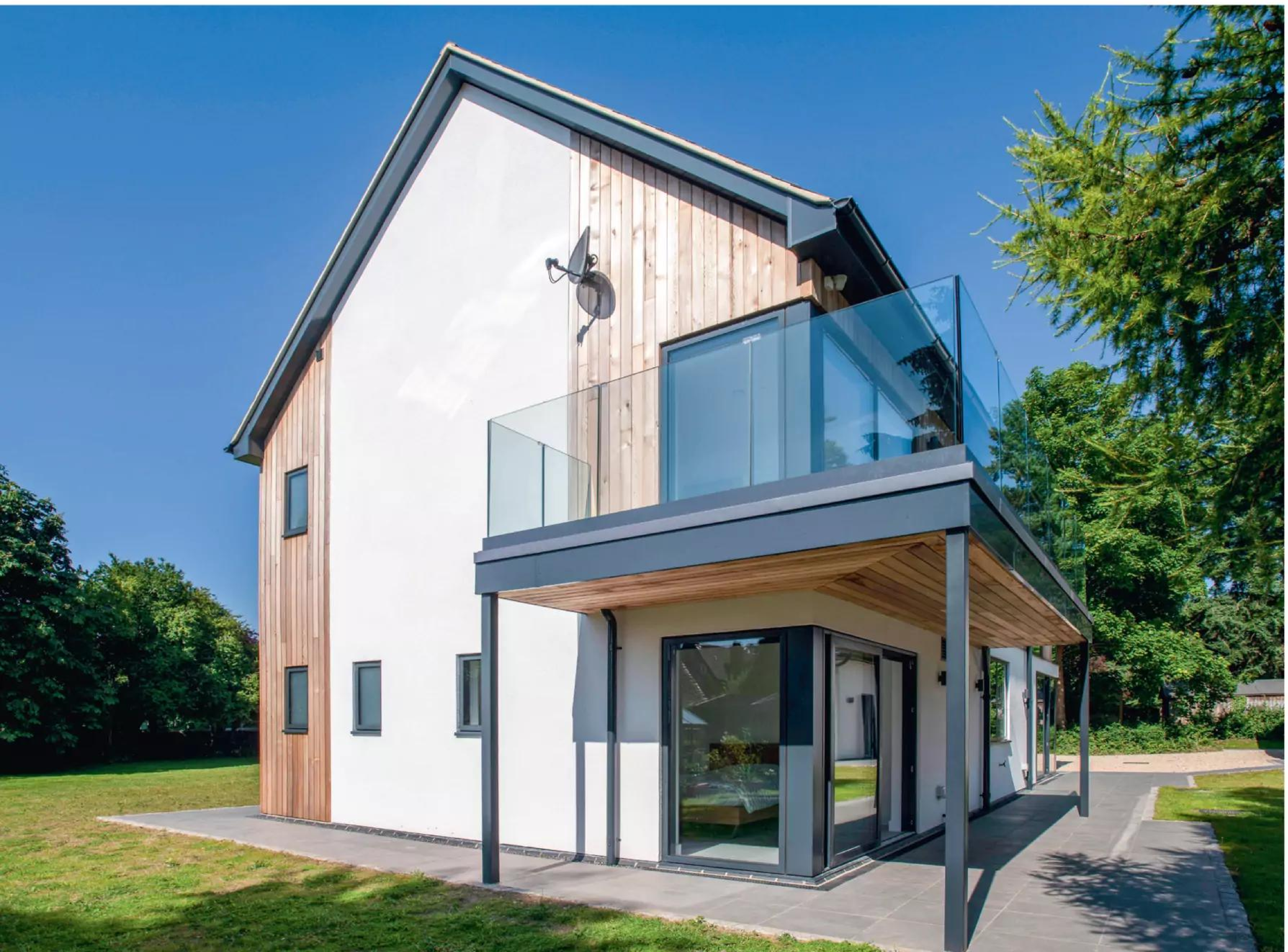
Plans for the proposed four-bedroom home were submitted to the Vale of White Horse District Council in March 2021. Little did



Meet Vincent at Build It Live & hear his project story! **Claim your FREE tickets on page 34**

Vincent know that it would be eight full months before the scheme would gain approval. "The planners came back with two main conditions," Vincent says. "There's an old landfill about 200m away from my garden. It hadn't been used in decades but they were worried about landfill gas, so we had to undertake a desk study to check for ground contamination."

The real time-sapper was the discovery of brown long-eared bats in the loft of the existing house. "We had to have two surveys carried out by an ecologist, who said we had to design and build a new bat house for them," says Vincent. Working with the ecologist, Opinder designed a 20m^2 facility to be constructed in the garden. "The bat home had to be built first, before the old house could be



Opposite page: The timber frame home is finished with off-white acrylic render, British cedar cladding and a slate roof. A gravel driveway leads to the new standalone garage in the same materials palette

Above: The rear of the property is defined by glazing, with generously proportioned picture windows, glazed doors and a balcony featuring a glass balustrade, allowing for unobstructed views across the garden

FACT FILE

NAME Vincent Denecker
OCCUPATION Retired
LOCATION Oxfordshire
TYPE OF PROJECT Self build
PROJECT ROUTE Architect, timber frame supplier & main contractor
LAND COST Already owned
HOUSE SIZE 256m²
PLOT SIZE 1.5 acres
PROJECT COST £872,000
PROJECT COST PER M² £3,406
BUILDING WORK COMMENCED February 2023
BUILDING WORK TOOK 42 weeks

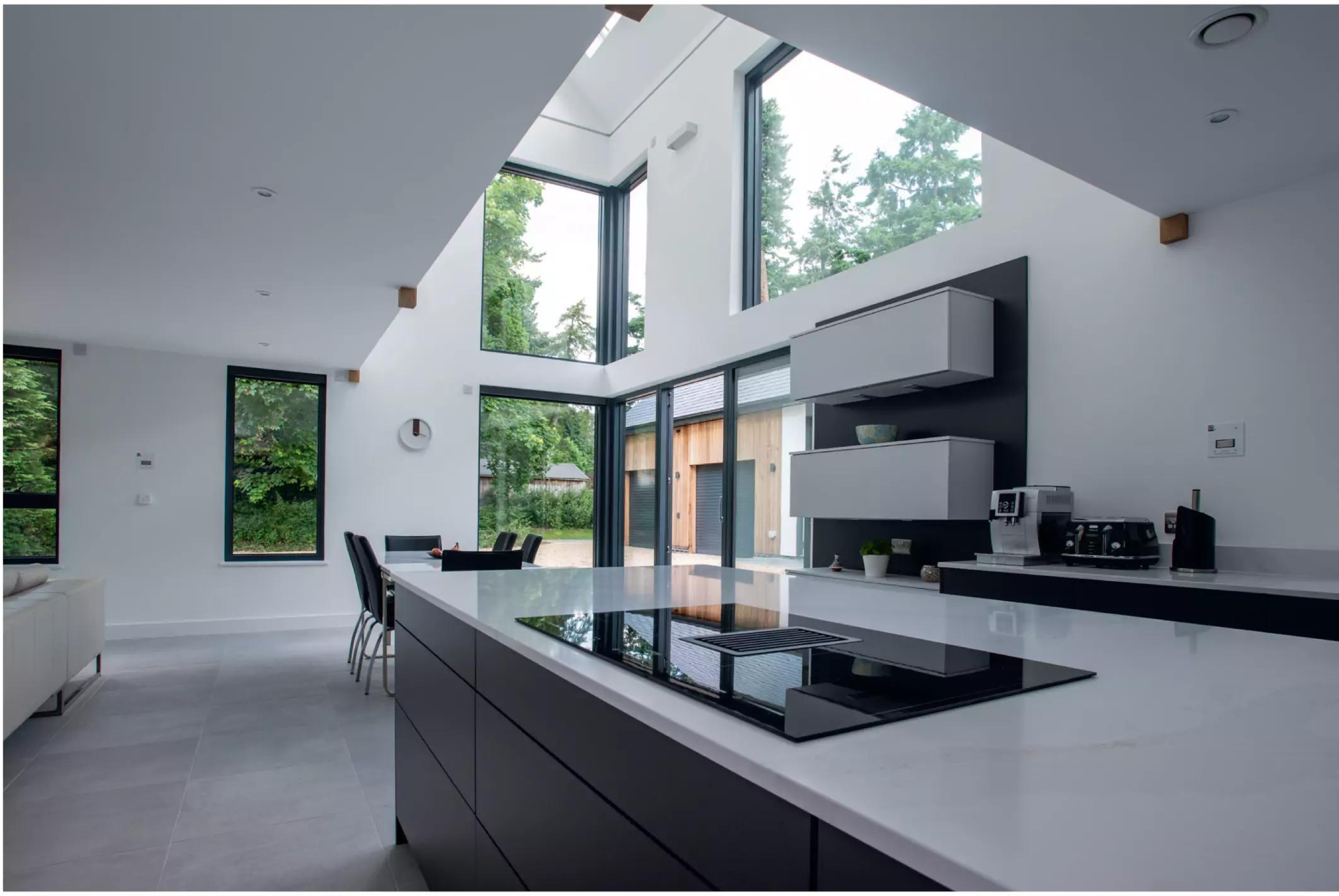
This page: The main hub of Vincent's new home is the open-plan living area, equipped with a lounge, dining area and kitchen. The double-height space features bifold doors and picture windows from Idealcombi, and is topped by Velux rooflights

demolished," Vincent explains. "It was difficult in terms of timing, as we weren't allowed to disturb the bats between May and September."

In order to accommodate this, while also delivering a suitable build programme, the property was demolished between October and December. The ecologist was present throughout the process, to oversee proceedings and ensure the safety of any remaining bats. "The old house's roof had to be removed tile-by-tile," says Vincent.

Navigating the build

Four firms responded to the project tender, including Jackson Building Solutions, who Opinder recommended for the job. "They had a team of trades and a project manager," says Vincent. Soil conditions were good, and work began with the construction of the mass concrete foundations, which feature 600mm-wide



footings. "The ground investigation report recommended these should be a minimum depth of 0.6m below the existing ground, to ensure structural stability," says Vincent.

Next up, Frame Work Synergies arrived to install the timber frame. Prefabricated offsite, the panels feature 180mm-thick insulation, covered with a vapour-preamble waterproof membrane. The structure was erected in just two weeks. Once the shell was complete, Idealcombi windows and glazed doors were installed.

Progress on site was smooth, but the lasting effects of Brexit, the pandemic and the war in Ukraine did raise a number of challenges. "We couldn't source Siberian larch for the exterior cladding, so we

Above: Vincent's kitchen was designed by J&S House of Design and crafted by German firm, Bauformat. The handleless cabinets are finished in colours Carbon and Moonlight Grey, while 20mm silestone worktops in Calacatta Gold complete the space

I LEARNED...

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE the importance of a large contingency when setting your project budget. This is designed to cover unplanned events outside your control. My build was affected by Covid, the war in Ukraine and pressure on supply chains.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION with both your builder and your architect is essential, as many decisions have to be made quickly and effetively throughout the project to bring it to completion.

THE PLANNING APPLICATION PROCESS for a new house can be lengthy. In particular, you may find you need to spend time and money on various surveys, so be prepared.

had to go with British cedar instead," says Vincent. "Inflation was also rising, but I was expecting it and had put a contingency budget to one side to deal with the price increases."

Every month, Vincent had a meeting with Opinder and the builders, where they reviewed the project and worked through a list of actions. "These regular meetings kept the project on track," he says. "Jackson is a very good company and had someone here every day, sometimes on weekends. They never missed a deadline."

The team even helped Vincent when issues arose with his temporary accommodation. "I lived in a caravan in the garden during the works," he says. "The first day I had no electricity connection. It was November so it was freezing cold, but Jackson managed to persuade the local electricity supplier to switch the connection from the house to the caravan, on a Sunday!"

When it was time to move out of the caravan 12 months later, in November 2023, the contractors helped to move it closer to the road, ready for collection. "They had to manoeuvre it between my new house and the garage," says Vincent. "It's a tiny space, so it was very nerve-wracking. They managed to relocate it to the gate

> “It was brilliant seeing how it was built, step by step, and witnessing the different construction phases”

Below: The master bedroom comes complete with a dressing room and a spacious private bathroom. Sliding doors connect the space to an impressive wraparound balcony

of my property 10 minutes before the lorry arrived.”

As for the interior, Vincent did a lot of research to find the perfect fixtures and finishes, leaning on the pros where necessary. “I worked with a local company on the kitchen and bathrooms,” he says. “They really helped me to achieve the look I was going for. I found working on the interior very rewarding. I was able to get exactly what I wanted.”

A fine result

Just a year after the build commenced, Vincent's new, highly efficient property was complete, its stylish contemporary look enhancing the tree-lined plot. A new gravel driveway leads to the standalone garage, while a paved pathway connects to the front porch.

Step inside, and you're greeted by a double-height entrance. To the left is the main living space, featuring a lounge area that flows through to the kitchen-diner beyond in a U-shape plan. A partial wall with a double sliding pocket door segregates the cooking area from the living room, creating a broken-plan arrangement.

The dining zone is set within a soaring atrium – Vincent's favourite space – reaching to the roof and topped with Velux windows. “There's always plenty of light, even when it's cloudy outside,” he says. “Plus, there's this real sense of volume and I love the connection it has with the garden.” A utility and ensuite bedroom-cum-study complete the ground floor.

Upstairs, a generous landing offers a spot to take in views, with a galleried section overlooking the dining room. A master bedroom – including dressing room, ensuite and balcony with sliding doors – is complemented by two further bedrooms and the main bathroom.

Highly eco-friendly, the sustainable home benefits from rooftop solar panels and a heat pump ventilation (HPV) system that provides space heating and fresh air thanks to integral mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (MVHR), plus hot water via a second heat pump unit. “It's very airtight and warm, and the MVHR creates the perfect healthy environment inside,” Vincent says. “My energy consumption is less than that of a typical one-bed house and my energy bills have dropped significantly compared to the old 1930s property. It's generally a much more comfortable home to live in.”

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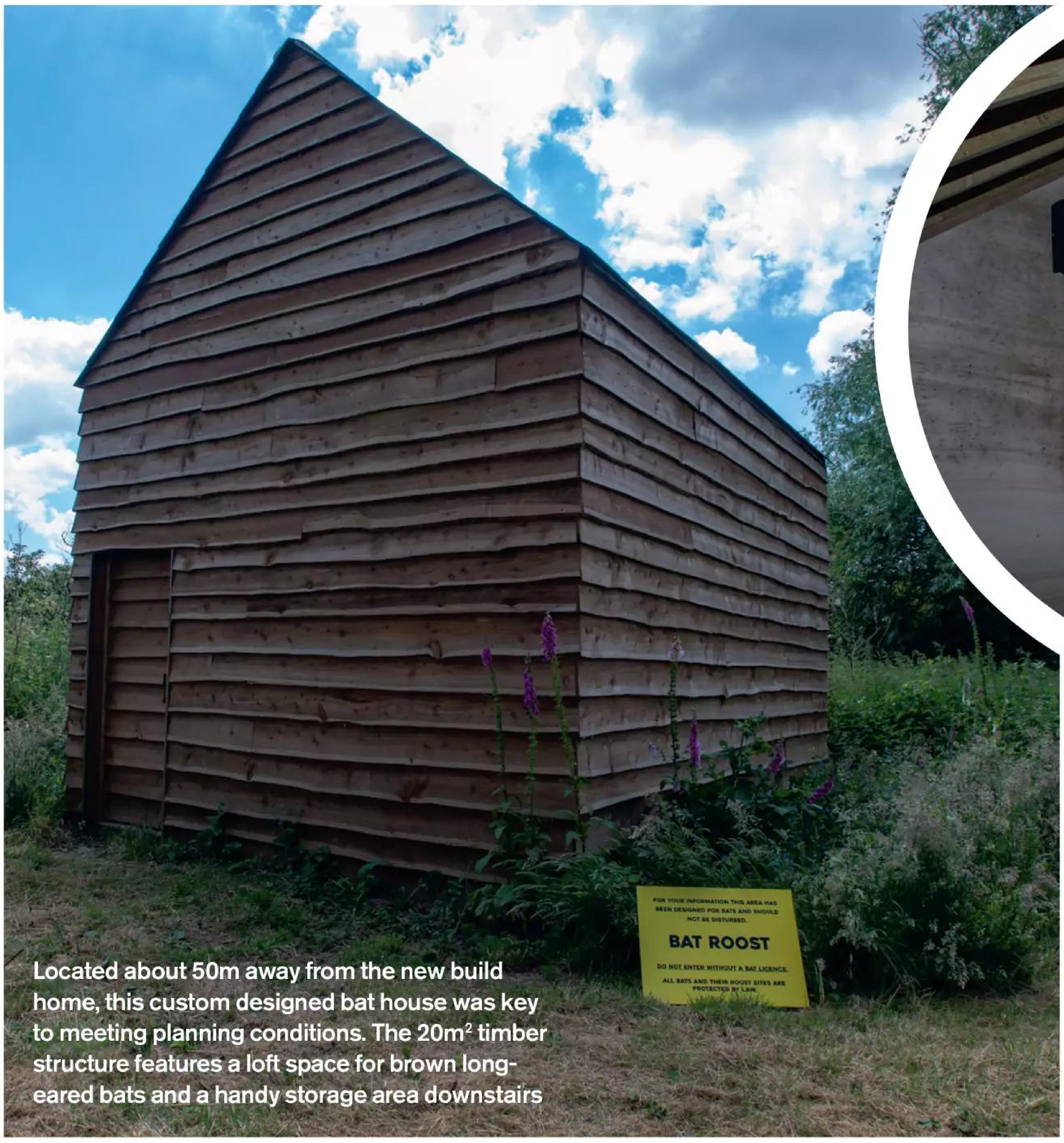


Located about 50m away from the new build home, this custom designed bat house was key to meeting planning conditions. The 20m² timber structure features a loft space for brown long-eared bats and a handy storage area downstairs

As for the most rewarding part of the process, Vincent loved watching his new home come together. "It was brilliant seeing how it was built, step by step, and witnessing the different construction phases," he says.

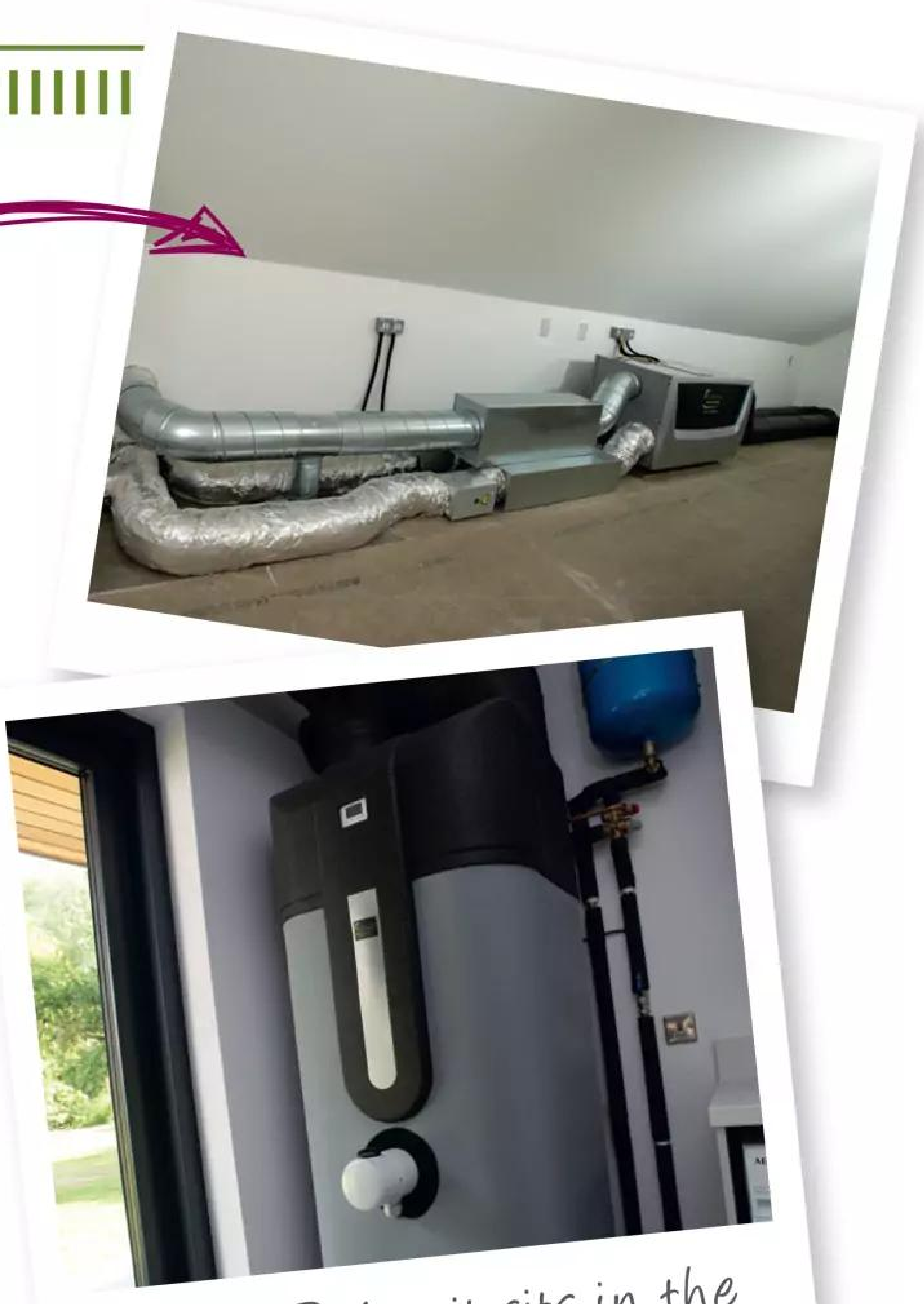
Vincent couldn't be happier with his new home, but he isn't ruling out undertaking another self build in the future. "I would do it again," he says. "I've got more experience now. It went so well, but there are always things you can improve on."

closer look

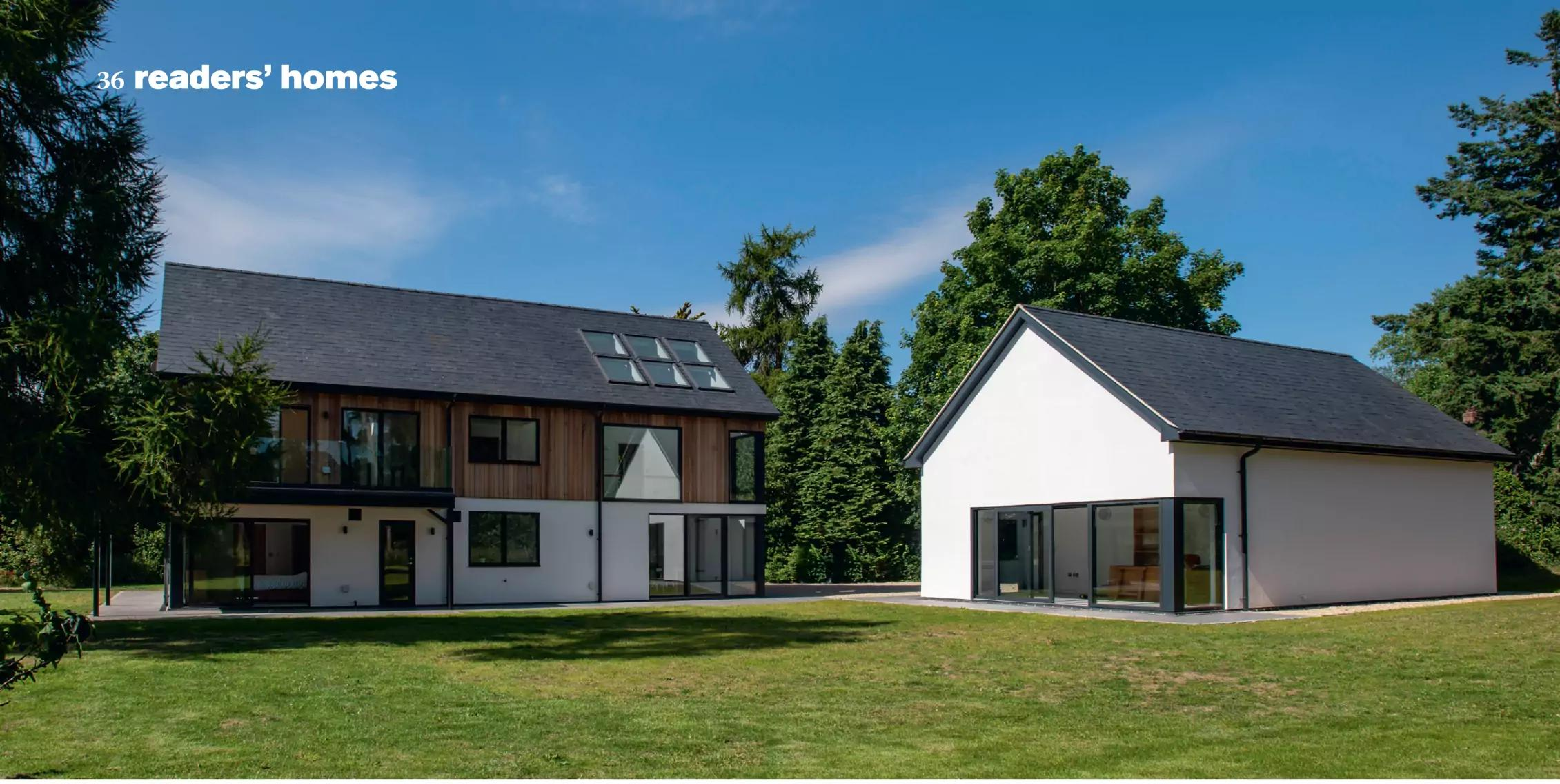
Heating, ventilation & hot water…

In an airtight and well-insulated home, you need fresh, filtered air in order to create a healthy indoor environment. To deliver this, Vincent opted for the HPV Series from Total Home Environment. The unit continuously extracts stale, warm air from wet rooms, whilst drawing in fresh, filtered air from outside. It also features an integral heat pump, to maximise performance. Up to 95% of the heat is exchanged, with the fresh air being directed into the habitable rooms of the home, via ductwork and ceiling terminals.

"The system delivers energy-efficient space heating or cooling to specific rooms, allowing for responsive individual room temperature control," explains Clarissa Youden, associate director at Total Home Environment. "In summer, the heat pump will reverse as required, to provide cooling and reduce humidity. Because of this, Vincent could feel a room temperature reduction of between four and five degrees." The setup also includes the HPW300 air-to-water heat pump. "This provides energy efficient domestic hot water in a pre-plumbed 300L water cylinder," says Clarissa. The HPW has a secondary coil that provides up to 20m² of wet underfloor heating to the bathrooms.

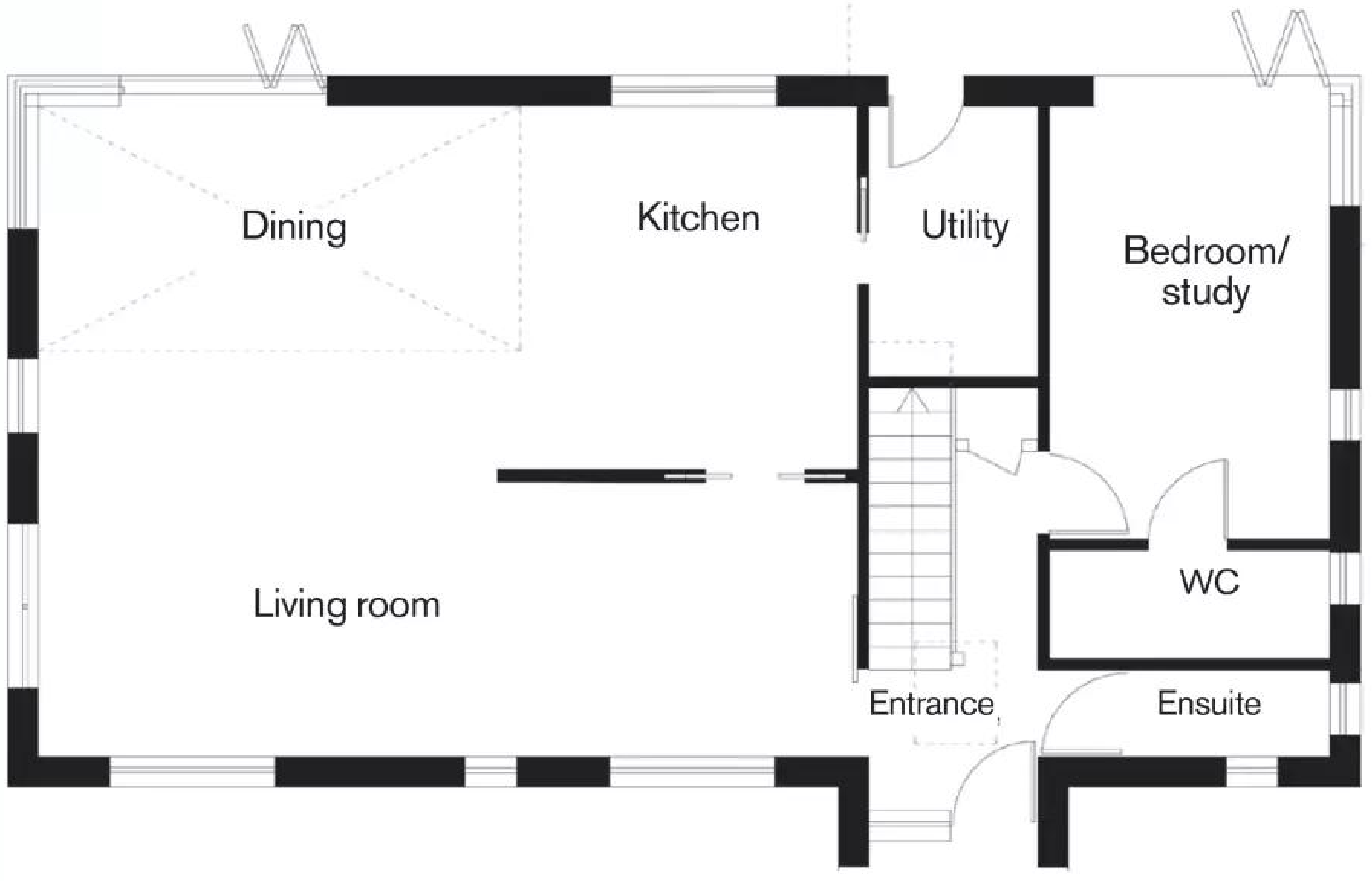


The HPV unit sits in the loft space, while the HPW is located in the utility

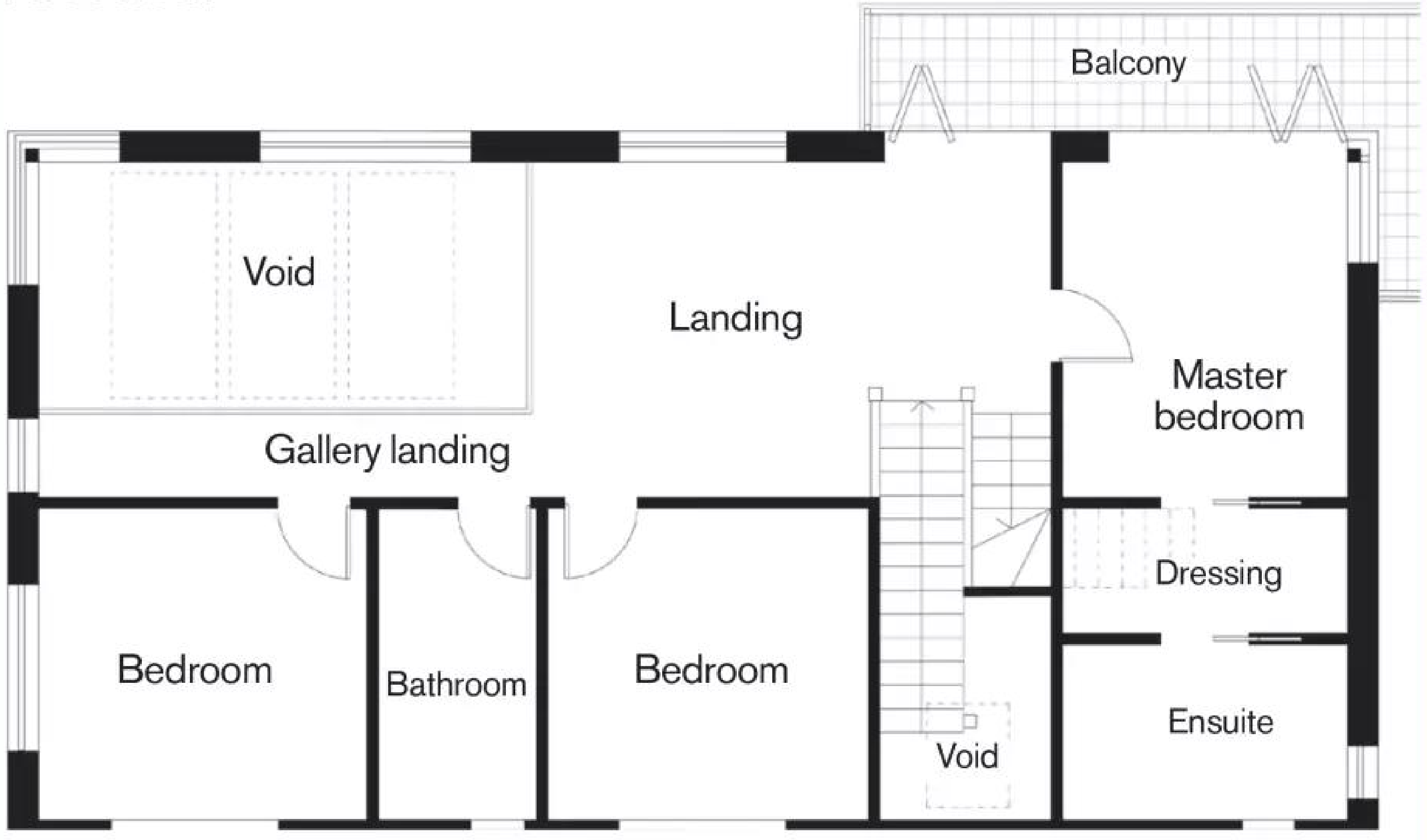


Floor plans

Ground floor


Dining
Kitchen
Utility
Bedroom/ study
Living room
WC
Entrance
Ensuite

First floor


Balcony
Void
Landing
Master bedroom
Gallery landing
Dressing
Bedroom
Bathroom
Bedroom
Void
Ensuite

TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£422	12%	£108,000
Foundations	£332	10%	£85,000
Timber frame	£422	12%	£108,000
External walls & windows	£543	16%	£139,000
Roof structure & covering	£203	6%	£52,000
Internal walls	£125	4%	£32,000
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£191	6%	£49,000
Joinery & fittings	£109	3%	£28,000
Plumbing & heating (incl bathroom & kitchen)	£391	11%	£100,000
Electrics	£219	6%	£56,000
Decorating	£31	1%	£8,000
Fees	£223	7%	£57,000
External works	£195	6%	£50,000
Grand total			**£872,000**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **Lapd Architects** 01865 407722 www.lapdarchitects.co.uk BUILDER **Jackson Building Solutions** 07826 757074 www.jacksonbuild.com STRUCTURAL ENGINEER **Ironwood Structural Design** 01993 411414 www.ironwood-design.co.uk TIMBER FRAME **Frame Work Synergies** 0800 085 3341 www.fwsl.co.uk WINDOWS & GLAZED DOORS **Idealcombi** 01582 860940 www.idealcombi.com ROOF WINDOWS **Velux** 01592 778225 www.velux.co.uk HEATING SYSTEM **Total Home Environment** 0345 260 0123 www.totalhome.co.uk KITCHEN & BATHROOMS **J&S House of Design** 01865 596768 www.jshouseofdesign.co.uk **Bauformat** www.bauformat.de OAK FLOORING **Manor Flooring** 01865 321554 www.manorflooring.co.uk

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Designed to impress

Mike and Karuna Wood were guided by the vision of their architect to remodel their London home into something a cut above standard

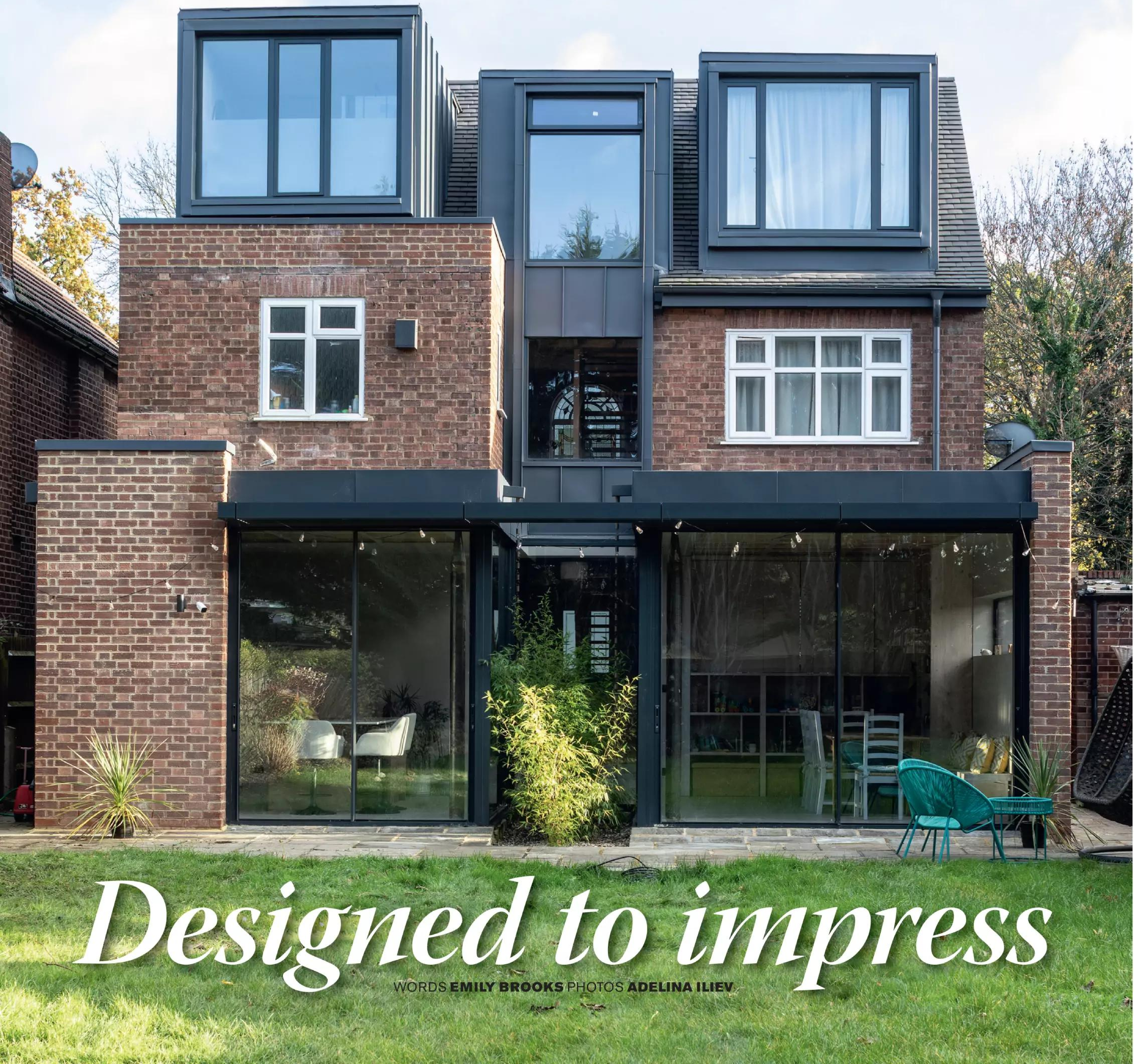
WORDS **EMILY BROOKS** PHOTOS **ADELINA ILIEV**

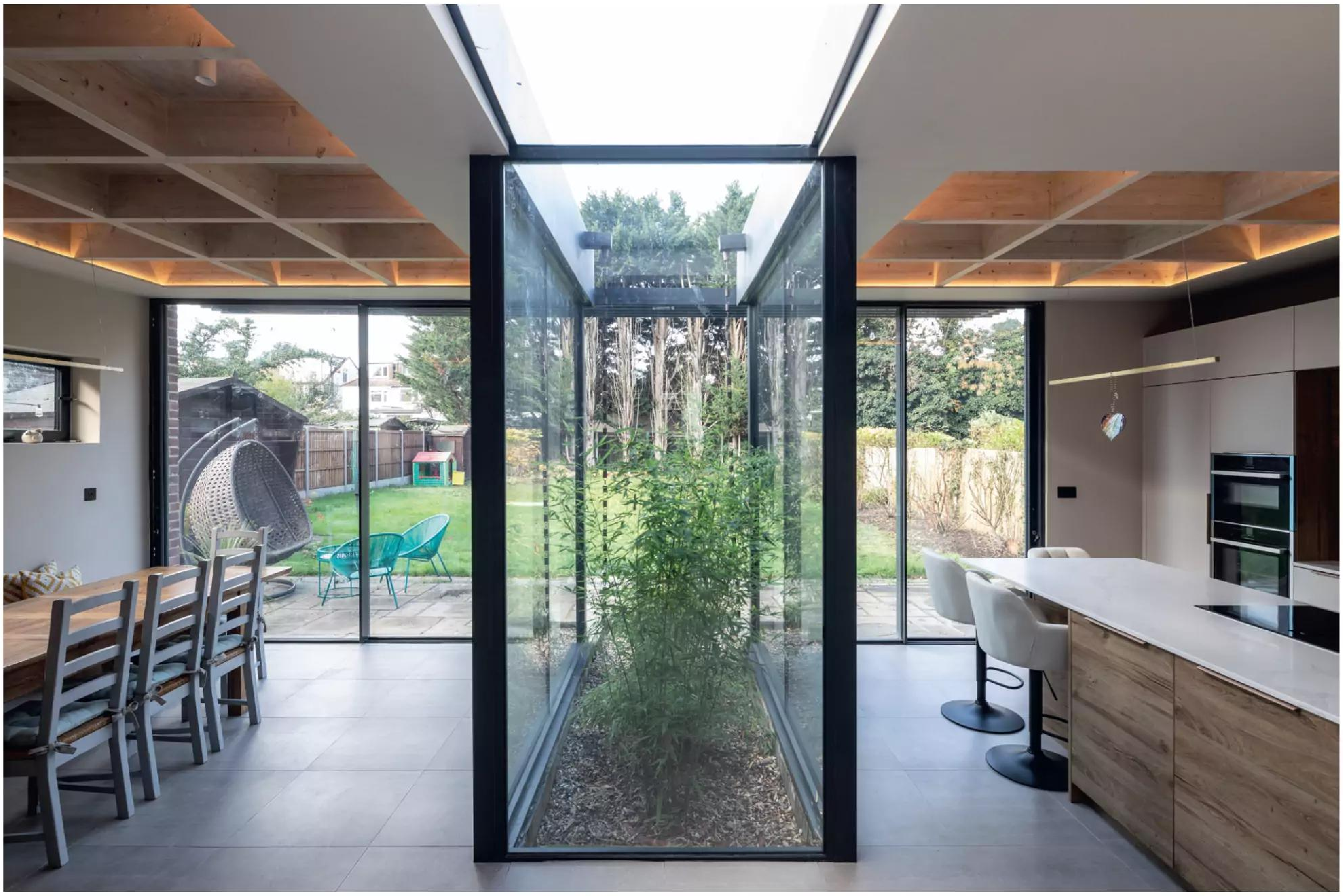
When Mike and Karuna Wood bought their North London home, they saw a property that was ripe with potential. The 1930s, double-fronted brick house had a large garden at the rear that could easily be built on, while still leaving plenty of room outside. The loft hadn't been converted either, offering the opportunity to add space and value in the future. "The plot was pretty big and the footprint of the house quite small, so I always knew we'd do some kind of project to increase it. There were lots of options," says Mike.

Having potential is one thing, but fulfilling it is another. Mike, who describes himself as "an armchair architecture enthusiast," harboured dreams that the couple would one day be able to create something special. A project that would be much more than a conventional box across the back and a by-the-numbers loft conversion. The couple moved from Hackney to be closer to Karuna's mother and sister, who live nearby, and to gain more space in anticipation of starting a family.

After their son arrived, the need to make changes became more urgent. "The conservatory was unusable for three-quarters of the year – it was freezing in winter and too hot in summer," says Mike. A large formal dining room at the front of the house was also rarely used, while the kitchen was too small as a family hangout and not well connected to the other rooms. "We wanted a more open living experience, but it was about rebalancing the layout and making it more practical, rather than adding a lot of space," Mike explains.

Having saved up some money in the intervening couple of years, which they supplemented by remortgaging, in 2019 they pressed go on the extension and renovation project they had been thinking





Above: The rain garden is a glazed recess that separates the dining area from the kitchen; it breaks up what would have been a large open space, and pulls the greenery of the outside right into the house

Left: A new hip-to-gable roof has been added to maximise useable space in the loft, incorporating zinc-clad dormers to provide additional headroom and light

about since they bought the house. As well as building an extension that would work better for family life, with good connections to the garden, they also wanted to create a new master suite in the loft. Beyond that, Mike says that he didn't want to be too prescriptive about the style or materials, trusting that any architect would bring their best ideas to the table.

The couple's architect, Irene Casajuana of CASA Architecture and Design, had not long set up her own studio when Mike and Karuna met her. "We could feel her enthusiasm for the project from the start, and she often went above and beyond for us," says Mike. "We explained what we wanted in terms of the overall living space, but we didn't want to constrain her ideas. So, we gave her a blank sheet of paper when it came to developing the architectural style."

Breaking the mould

Irene's idea was to give the house a strong central axis, with a new contemporary timber staircase (turned 180° from its original orientation) that forms a striking design statement. Thanks to the staircase's open treads, there are clear sightlines into the new kitchen-diner from the front door.

While the ground floor extension is essentially open plan, the kitchen and dining spaces are separated by a rain garden – a pocket of outside space that cuts into the central portion of the addition. The Japanese-inspired feature is fully glazed and filled with bamboo and other plants. "It sections off what could have been quite a cavernous space and brings nature right inside," says Mike.

An aluminium louvred brise-soleil – in the same anthracite grey as the zinc – runs across the rear of the house, shading the heavily glazed facade from harsh summer sun

FACT FILE

NAMES Mike & Karuna Wood

OCCUPATIONS Detective & accountant

LOCATION North London

TYPE OF PROJECT Renovation & extension

STYLE Contemporary update to 1930s house

CONSTRUCTION METHOD Brick & block

PROJECT ROUTE Architect & main contractor, with additional support from a professional project manager

PLOT SIZE 681m²

PROPERTY COST £850,000

BOUGHT November 2017

HOUSE SIZE 187m²

PROJECT COST £330,000

PROJECT COST PER M² £1,765

TOTAL COST £1,180,000

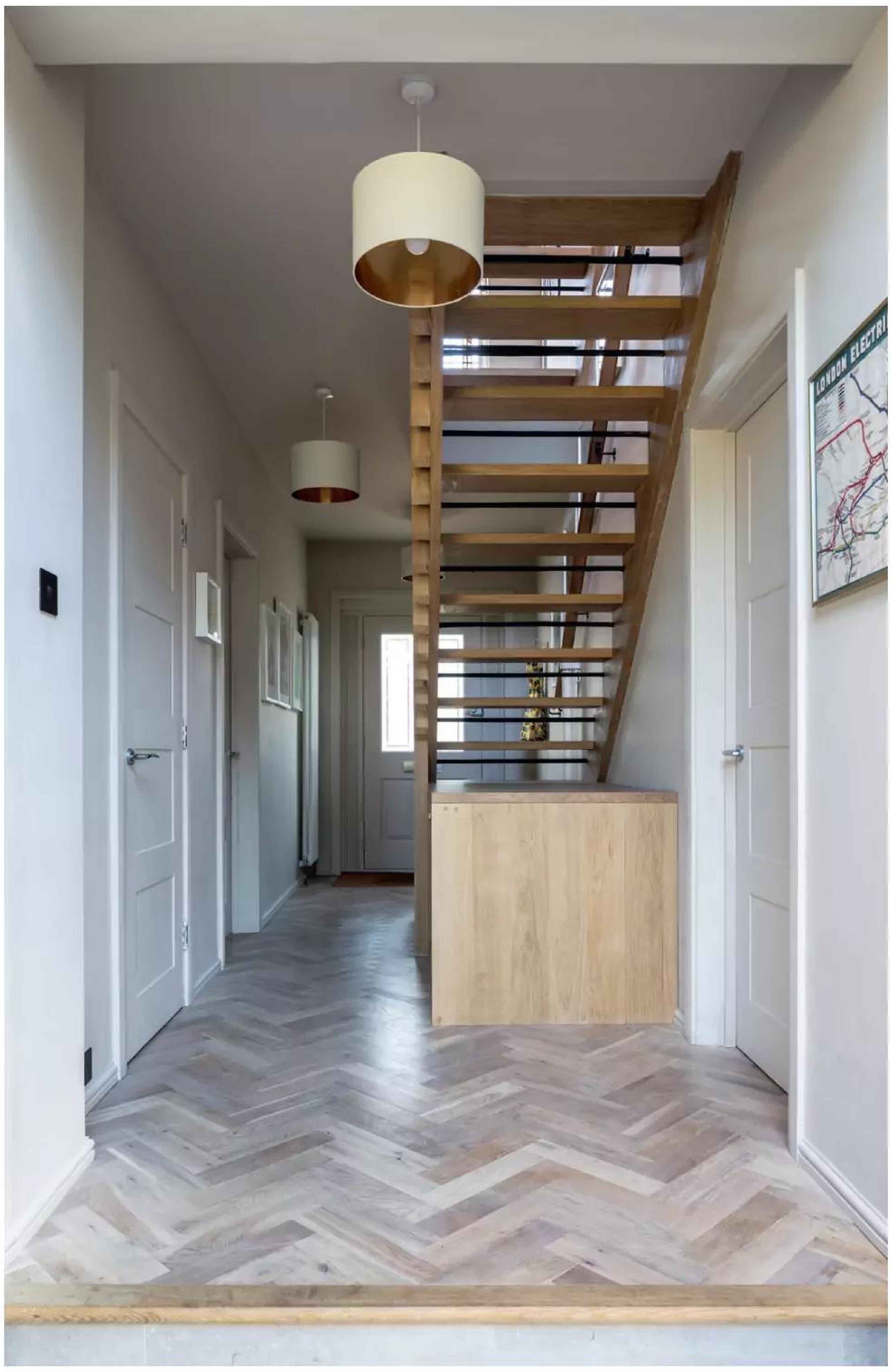
BUILDING WORK COMMENCED October 2021

BUILDING WORK TOOK 49 weeks

CURRENT VALUE £1,300,000

Above: The couple wanted contemporary units to complement the extension's architecture, and opted for a white Schmidt kitchen with timber accents to pick up on the wood tones of the coffered ceiling

Right: The old staircase faced the other way and didn't create a nice flow; with its open oak treads, the new version opens up views and allows light to penetrate from front to back



Continuing the theme of a broken-plan layout, the extension sits a couple of steps below the original house, so it feels connected but separate. The living room (in the old part of the building) and the new dining area are separated by a waist-height opening – like an internal window, but with bifold timber shutters instead of glazing, which can close the spaces off when needed. Finally, a practical utility room and WC have been carved out of the area in between the kitchen and the old formal dining room: Irene borrowed some

Above: Bespoke storage runs around one corner, providing vital storage for the children's toys. The joinery's simple grid pattern echoes that of the glulam beams that form the ceiling

Right & below: The island worktop is cantilevered at one end, to accommodate high bar stools

space from the latter to make this work, and the now slightly smaller room is used as Karuna's cosy study.

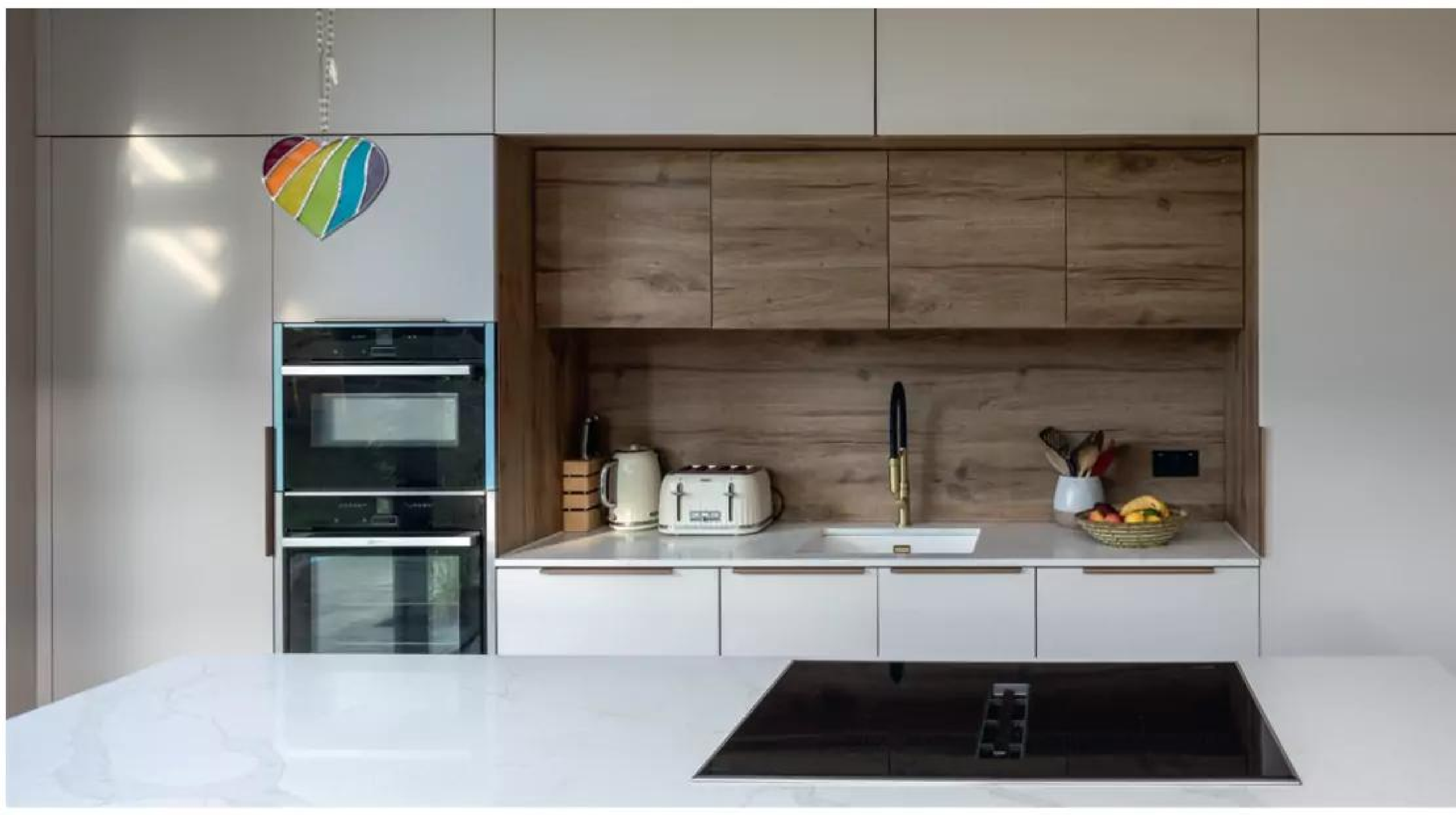
In the converted loft, that same idea of breaking up open-plan space with a central axis is repeated. The staircase emerges in the middle of the room, with a dressing area and bathroom on one side and the sleeping area on the other. A run of three large, zinc-clad dormer windows faces the garden – one in the bedroom, one in the bathroom and another in the middle, sitting above the central stairwell.

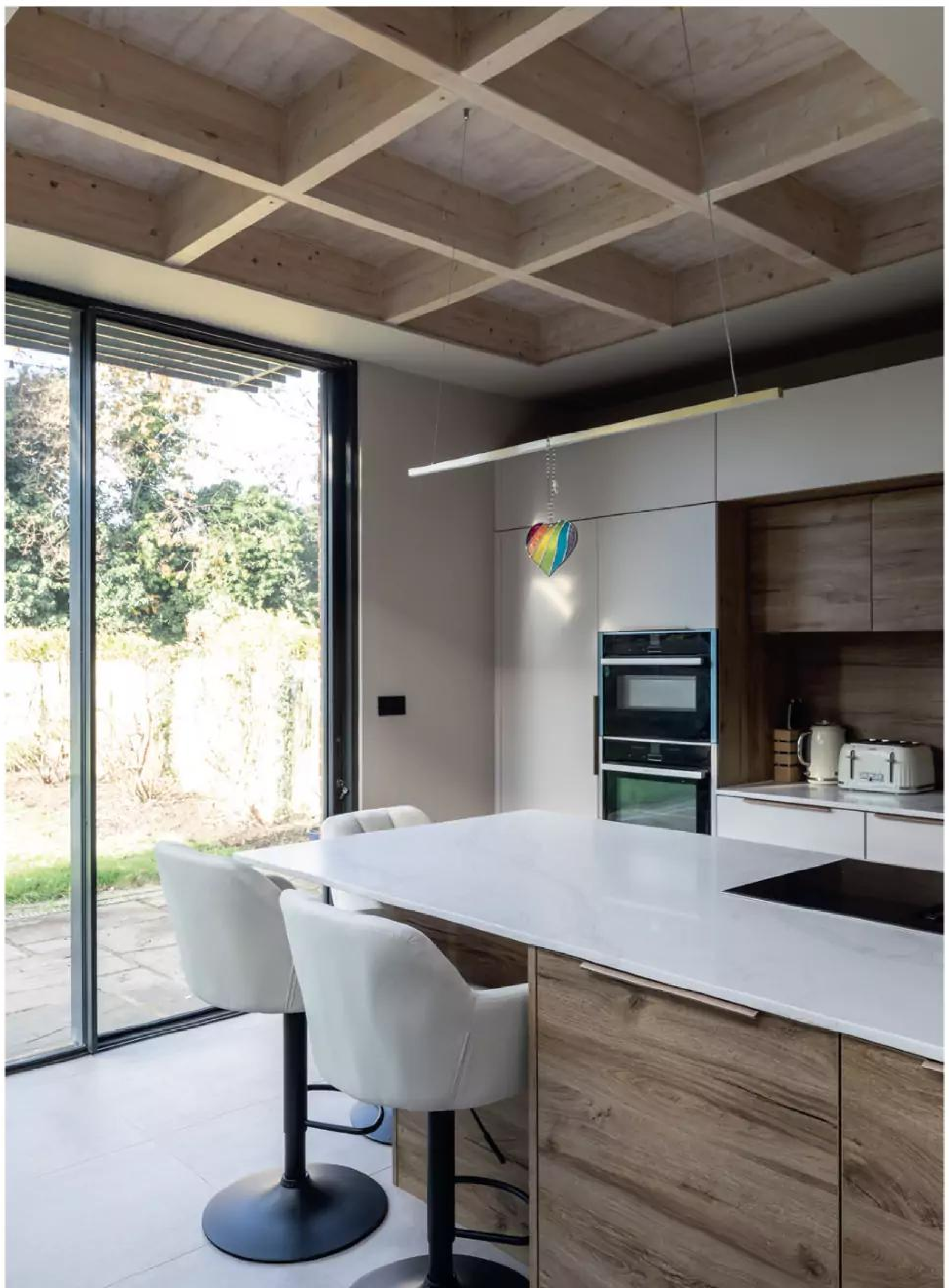
The loft conversion was completed under permitted development, but the ground floor extension required planning permission. "The house is wide, but not deep, and we had quite a lot of wrangles with the planners," says Mike. The local authority sets a 4m limit on a full-width extensions in the neighbourhood (which is a conservation area), but such a one-size-fits-all rule didn't make much sense for this particular house, especially as there was so much garden to play with. Eventually, Irene persuaded them that, in this case, a 5m extension would be acceptable, and the plans were passed.

Fixing the budget

The tender process and drawing up a contract took a while. Irene's husband, Kaz Norozian, works as a project manager and helped with this stage, meticulously drawing up a detailed, watertight contract. It came in very useful once the work began, as it meant everyone knew where they stood with regards to the fixed-price agreement with the builders. "I did question whether that was really what they wanted to do," says Mike. "From the point they did the tender to their first day on site was the best part of a year, by which time costs [for materials, equipment etc] had risen."

Opting for a fixed price can be a benefit for many projects, and certainly saved the Woods a significant sum. But there were understandably conversations surrounding works that had become more expensive in the intervening period, such as the underpinning – which also turned out to be more complex than expected. "The





Above & bottom: A large bifold partition separates the living room (in the original part of the house) from the new extension. It's mostly kept open, so that it allows light to flow from front to back, but there's always the option to close it for greater privacy

contract made it very clear what everyone was required to deliver, and meant that we stuck to our budget. The only thing we agreed to pay more for was the glazing, which came in at around an extra £10,000." Most importantly for the finished result, Mike was happy with the firm's quality of workmanship, which shines through.

The family moved in with Karuna's mother while the work was going on (Karuna was expecting their second child by this point). With no experience of taking on such a large building project, the couple relied on Irene to check that everything was progressing according to plan on site, and that no corners were being cut by the builders. "She would come in and hold their feet to the fire a bit, making sure that they were using the right materials, and that everything was as she'd specified," says Mike.

Mike also singles out the joiner, Rafal Olifierko of GoFix Carpentry – who was procured via Irene, separate to the main contractor – for special mention. Rafal created the oak staircase that runs up the house and items of built-in joinery, such as the bifold screen between the living and dining rooms. "He was amazing – a complete perfectionist," says Mike. "He'd say he'd be here for two or three hours, and still be here 10 hours later taking care of the tiny details. He was not expensive, either."

Life-changing experience

The house's first floor did not escape work, as its ceilings were slightly lowered to accommodate a more generous head height in the loft above. Mike and Karuna decided to refurbish the family bathroom on this floor, too, to reflect the quality finish elsewhere.

They kept their old gas boiler, which was fairly new, but replaced radiators and added a hot water tank to cope with the extra capacity of the loft bathroom. Insulating plasterboard was added to the

WE LEARNED...

WE ENJOYED working with an architect and trusted her vision throughout. Irene from CASA Architecture & Design went above and beyond for us, on everything from making sure that the builders were working to her specification through to suggesting suitable lighting that would complement her architectural scheme.

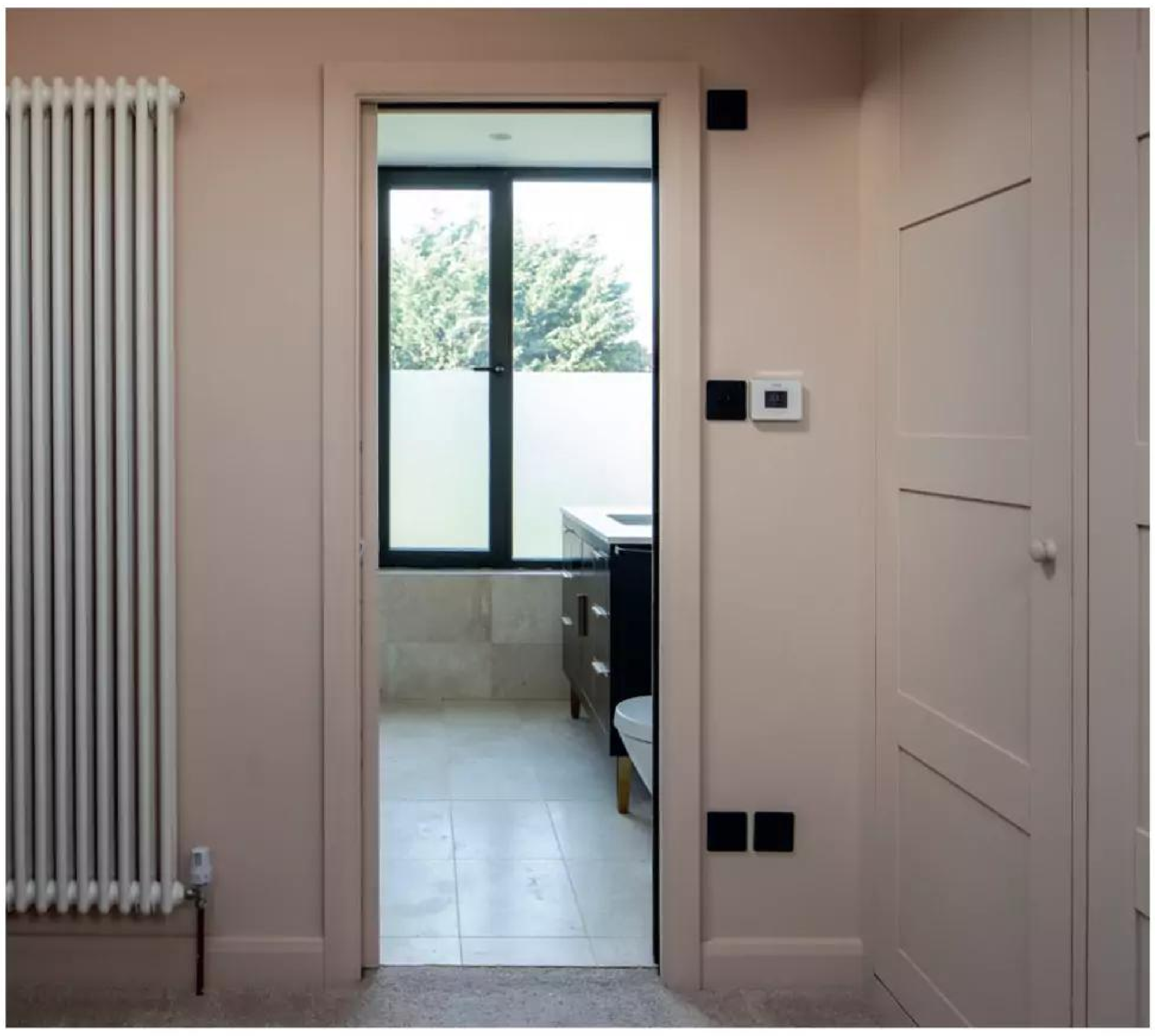
SEE A COUPLE of examples of your proposed builder's previous projects, to make sure you're happy with the workmanship. Back that up with a detailed, watertight contract so that you can avoid any grey areas where it's not crystal clear who is responsible for delivering what, and when. It takes time, but it is time well spent.

OUR SEPARATE UTILITY ROOM, off the kitchen, is a fantastic addition. With two young children, there's a lot of washing. Previously, we had it drying on racks all over the house. It's just so practical now.

A MAJOR BUILD like this can be a lot to take on yourself if you don't have a project manager throughout. I might not have been brave enough to do it, had I known how stressful it was going to be!

Left & below: Bespoke joinery is a feature of the project, from details such as the contemporary wall panelling in the loft bedroom, through to fitted wardrobes

Below left: A space-saving pocket door leads through to the ensuite in the attic, where partial privacy glass enables maximum light and views out



internal walls in the older part of the house to improve the thermal performance, while electrics were upgraded throughout.

The children, now two and five, have an amazing space to play and grow. Whether the kids are spreading out with their toys in the dining room or camping out in the garden, Mike and Karuna can pretty much keep an eye on them at all times. "It's so, so practical," says Mike of the layout. "It really just works."

As for Irene, "she's become a friend – she came to Karuna's birthday party last year. As someone who has always been interested in architecture but had no knowledge of it, she indulged me," says Mike. "The project has been a defining experience in my life – I was so involved all the way through, and at times it felt like we'd put a lot on the line. It was a real emotional roller-coaster. But this house is what I'd always dreamed of, and I don't think I'll ever get tired of it."

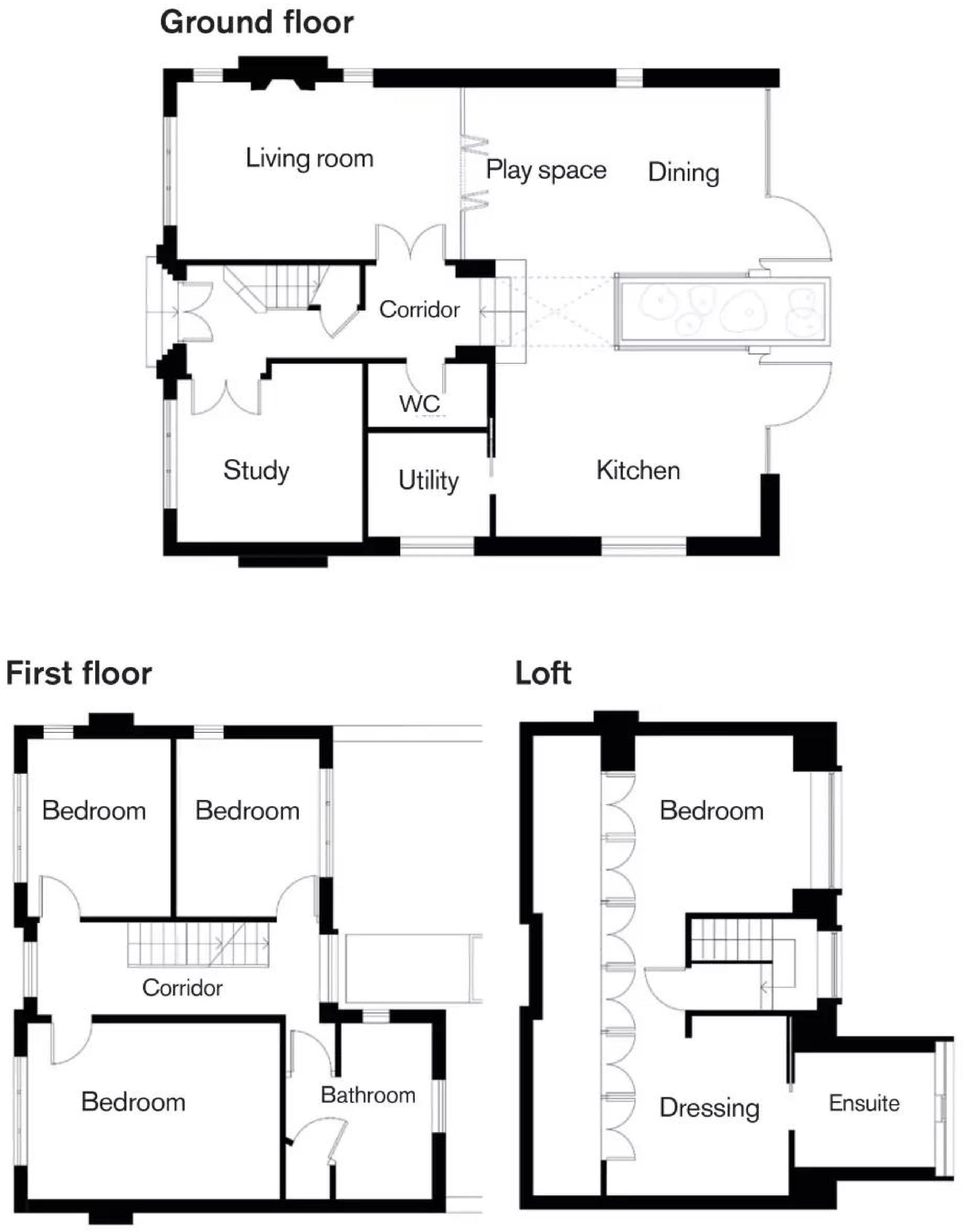
closer look

Feature ceiling...

The coffered ceiling is an architectural idea that stretches back to classical Greek and Roman times. Mike and Karuna's contemporary version is stripped back to a neat grid of glulam beams. The couple liked the idea of an exposed timber ceiling in their new extension, both as a point of difference to the original period rooms in the house, and to add a feeling of warmth with natural materials. The glulams are structural in one direction, while the crossing beams are purely decorative. In places, the grid pattern neatly continues on the vertical, running into full-height shelving. The spacing between the timbers was carefully designed to work structurally, aesthetically and functionally. There's concealed LED strip lighting around the perimeter of the ceiling for an atmospheric glow at night, as well as slim linear pendants over the dining table and the kitchen island, creating symmetry between the two connected halves of the extension.

Characterful beamwork

Floor plans



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£118	5%	£10,000
Downtakings & alterations	£71	3%	£6,000
Builder's works & below ground drainage	£353	16%	£30,000
Roofing	£165	7%	£14,000
Timber windows (incl courtyard sliders)	£71	3%	£6,000
Cladding	£71	3%	£6,000
Plumbing & drainage	£59	3%	£5,000
Electrics	£23	1%	£2,000
Tiling/floor finishes	£188	9%	£16,000
Kitchen (incl appliances & worktop)	£88	4%	£7,500
Joinery	£706	32%	£60,000
Decoration	£82	4%	£7,000
Fixtures & fittings	£182	8%	£15,500
External work	£35	2%	£3,000
Grand total			**£330,000**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **CASA Architecture & Design** 07767 713172 www.casaarchitecture.co.uk STRUCTURAL ENGINEER **Engineeria** 020 7580 4588 www.engineeria.com MAIN CONTRACTOR **Builders Team** 07523 290730 www.builders-team.co.uk PROJECT MANAGER **Noroson** 07949 299101 www.noroson.com JOINERY **Gofix Carpentry** 07824 428992 www.gofixcarpentryltd.com SHADING SYSTEMS **Nationwide Louvre Company** 01922 457204 www.nlcontracts.co.uk GLAZING **MDM Glass** 020 8673 6868 www.mdmglass.co.uk BRICKS **Forterra** 0330 123 017 www.forterra.co.uk UNDERFLOOR HEATING **Wunda** 01291 634140 www.wundagroup.com KITCHEN **Schmidt** www.home-design-schmidt.uk

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HOME STRETCH

WORDS **CAROLINE EDNIE** PHOTOS **DAVID BARBOUR**

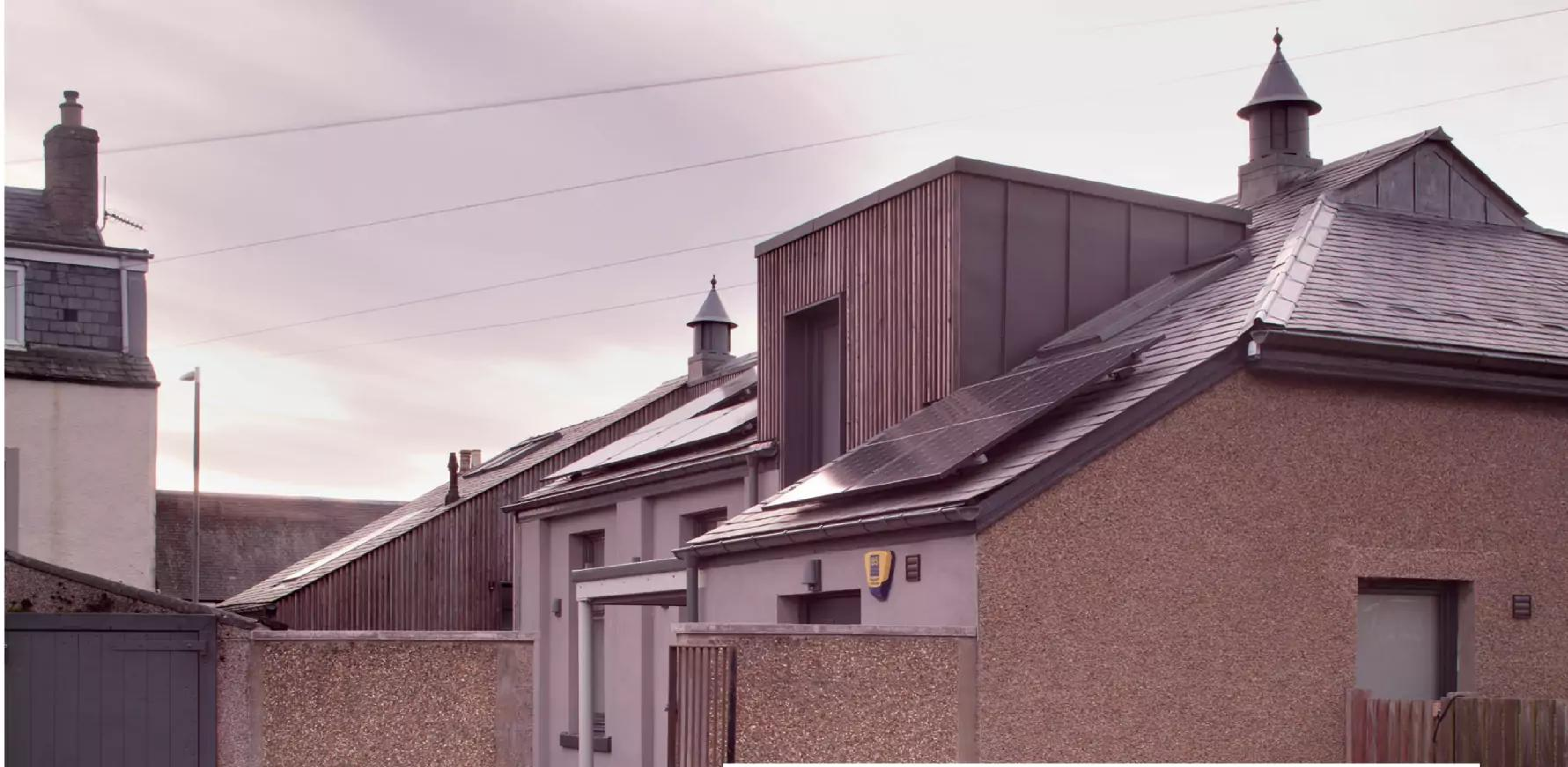
Experienced self builder **Christine Stewart** and her husband **Robert** have renovated an outdated church hall, self-managing the works to make savings along the way

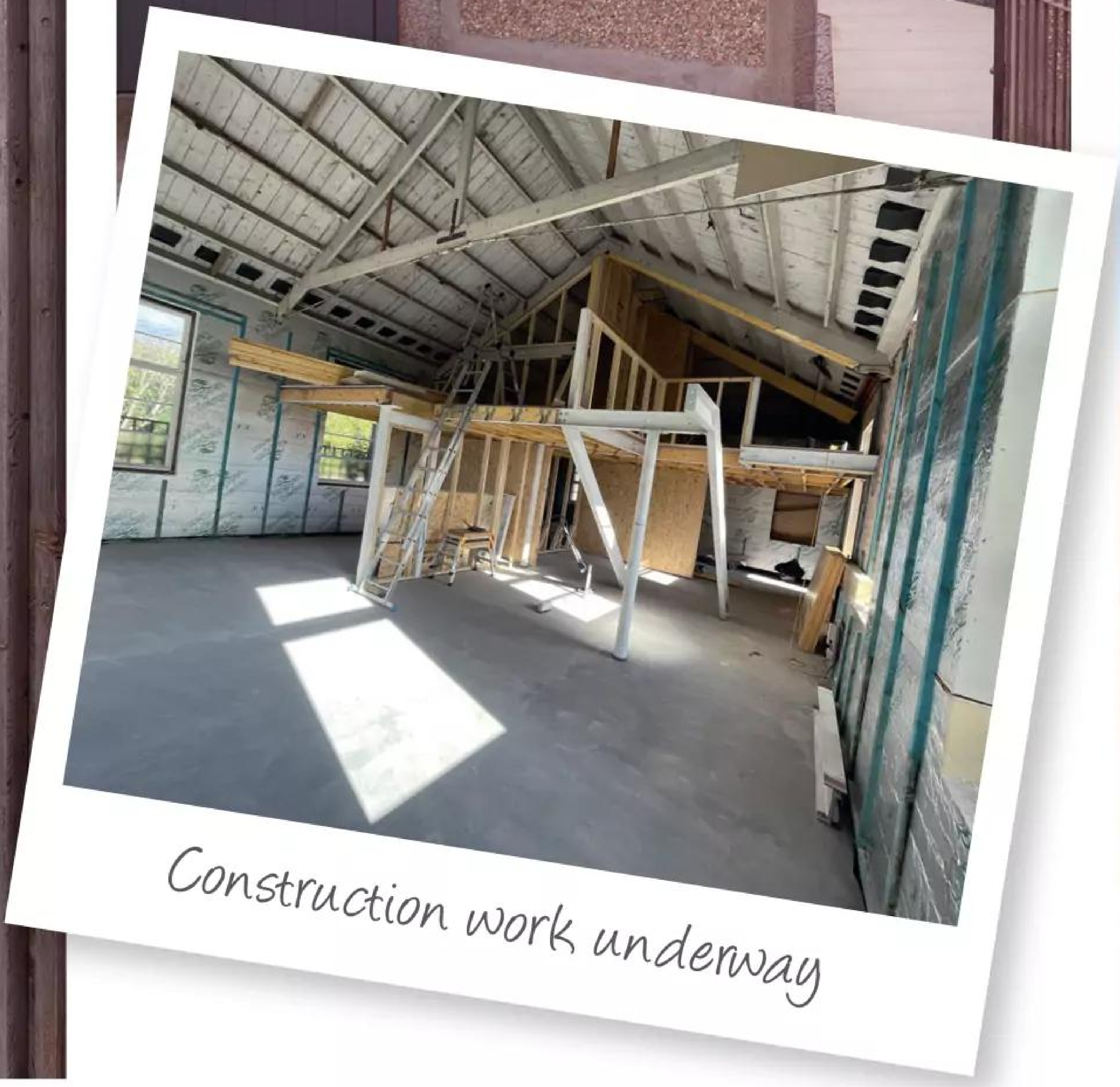
Having gained confidence from the experience of completing her first home building project in the Scottish Borders town of Kelso in 2019 (you can read this story at www.self-buid.co.uk/hamilton), Christine Stewart decided to do it all again two years later when she arrived at an important crossroads. "I was in the process of a big change," says Christine. "When my mum retired, we decided to sell the childcare business that we had run together since 1993. I felt that giving up work would allow me the opportunity and finances to take on another building project, this time as a full-time project manager, rather than juggling it with my job running the company."

Christine didn't have to look very far for her next opportunity; it was literally on her doorstep, or rather adjacent to her previous project, in the shape of a former 1930s church hall. The building had been the premises of the family's childcare business up until 2019, when they moved to a different location in the town. It was at this point that Christine converted the front part of the single-storey hall into a two storey, three-bedroom home for herself. The undeveloped, 112m^2-long back part of the hall, which was being rented out as a commercial storage premises at the time, was originally earmarked as an accessible home for her parents to retire to. But this plan changed when they decided to stay put in their home in the Borders countryside.

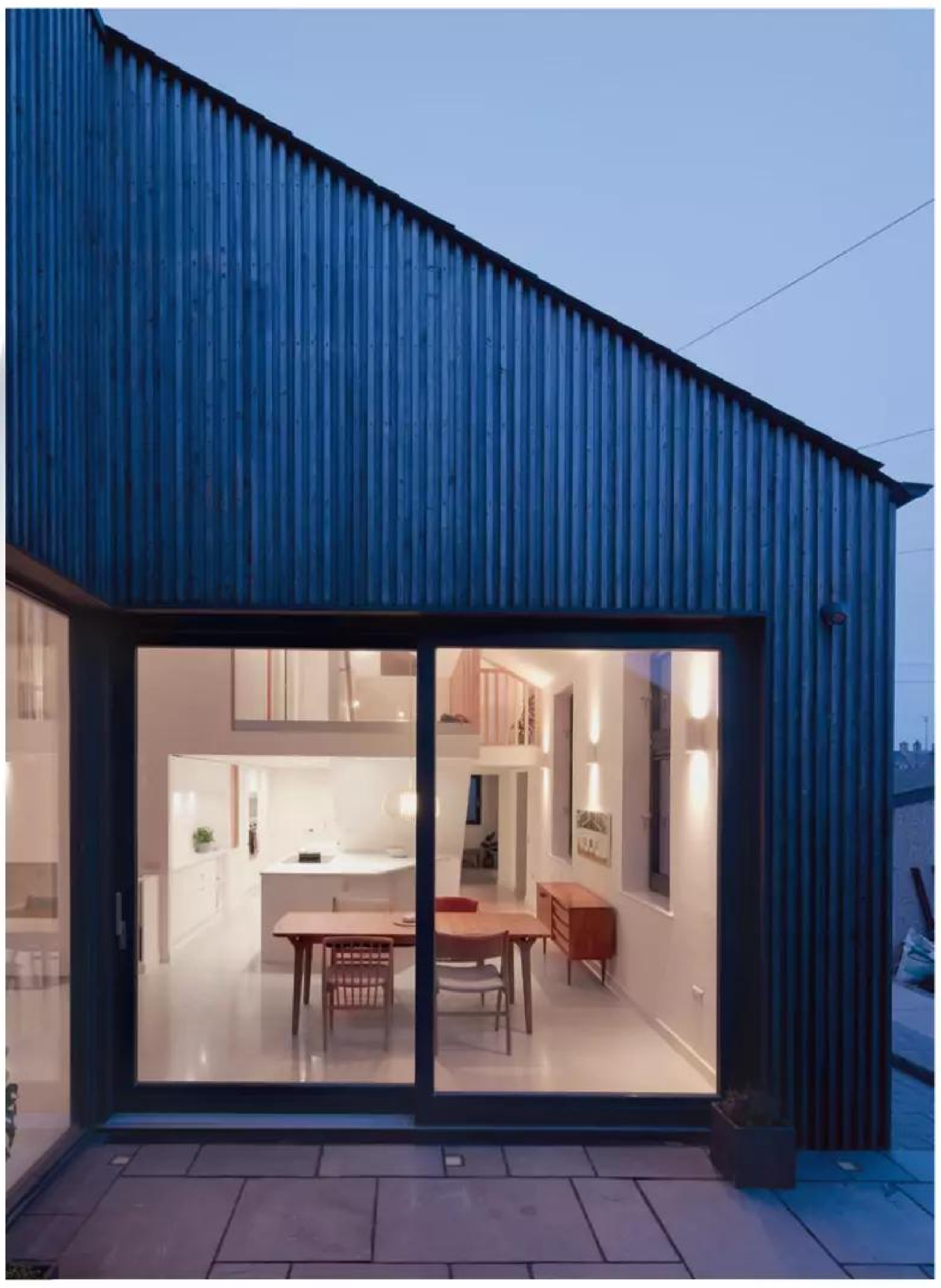
"I started thinking about converting it in 2021, as a sister project to my first house," says Christine. "To start with, it was just about ensuring the whole building was practical and sustainable for the future. Internally, everything was in need of an upgrade, including decor, energy efficiency and making the best use of the available space. But after meeting my husband Robert, it became a way to create a home for us to grow into as a family."

Christine was keen to bring in the same architects, Edinburgh-based Chambers McMillan, which was responsible for designing her first home next door. The company has since evolved into two





Construction work underway



FACT FILE

NAMES Christine & Robert Stewart

OCCUPATIONS Children's nursey director & psychiatrist

LOCATION Scottish Borders

TYPE OF PROJECT Renovation

PROJECT ROUTE Architect-designed; owner self-managed individual trades

METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION Steel & timber frame

HOUSE SIZE 157m²

PROPERTY COST £25,000 in 1993

PROJECT COST £326,000

COST PER M² £2,076

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED December 2022

BUILDING WORK TOOK 15 months

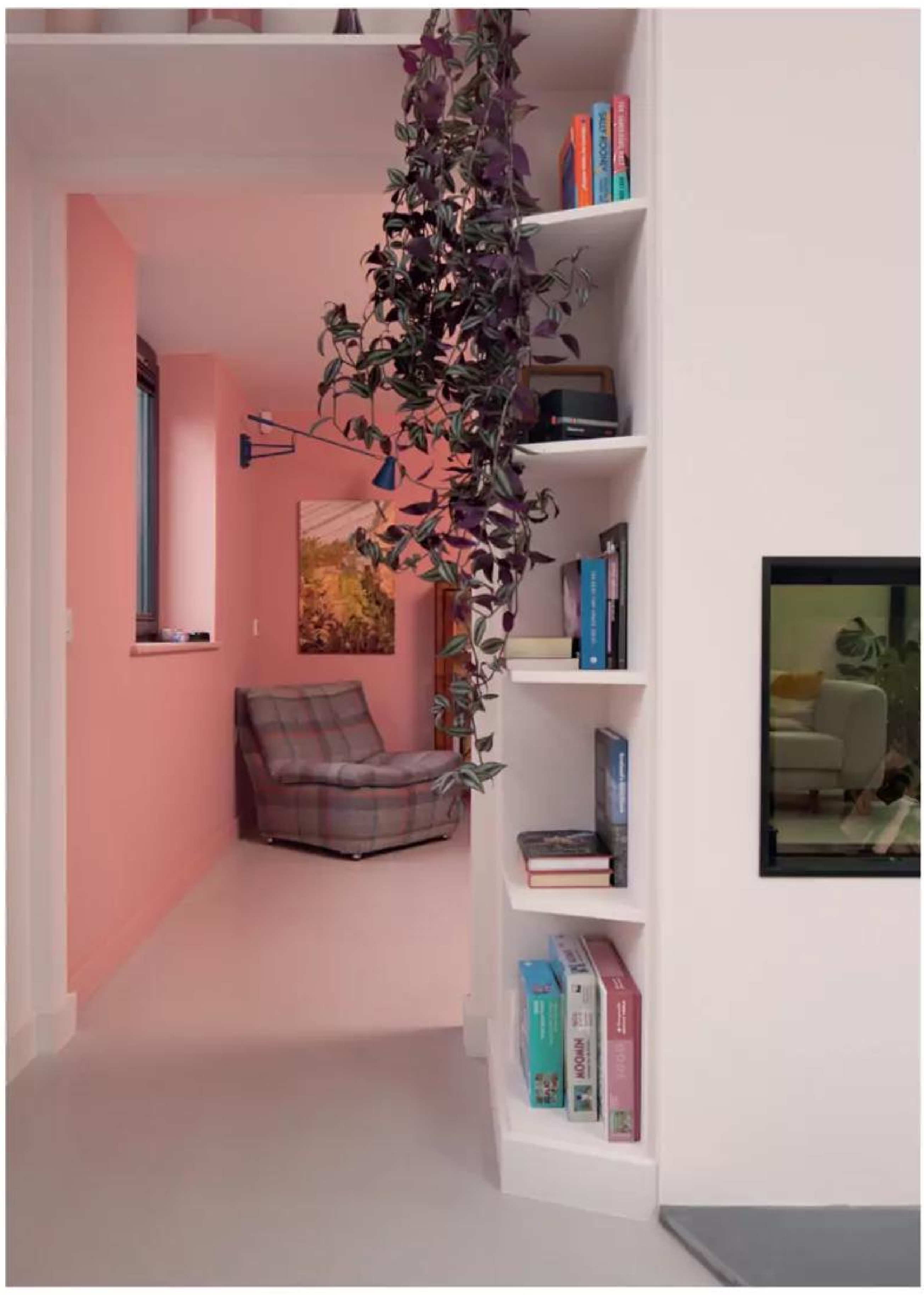
separate practices, Studio McMillan and Mind-the-Gap Inclusive Design Consultancy. Christine was looking for a similar design approach for her new house – namely a future-proofed, adaptable and accessible home. "I still wanted to retain as much of the original structure and character of the church hall as possible," she says. Knocking down and starting again would probably have been cheaper, but it was never on the cards. "The size of the site would have provided lots of flexibility and options, however it never even crossed my mind to demolish it," says Christine. "The building is an important part of my family history. From the inception of our business here in 1993, it has sustained us in so many ways through the years, and created memories that are embedded in its fabric."

Tailoring the design

Chambers McMillan worked on a series of 3D models, investigating various configurations for the internal space, and it was decided that increasing the useable space within the existing building was the most sustainable solution as this reduces the embodied carbon that would have been needed if an extension had been built. "The biggest challenge was working with the heights, as we couldn't change the roof from the outside. But instead of seeing this as a constraint we used it to our advantage to create more varied

Above: Scorched larch cladding and black zinc finishes have been used in the same way as Christine's first project to create continuity between the two designs

Above left: The courtyard provides a large outdoor space. There is hard landscaping to ensure the house is wheelchair accessible with a ramp from the street



and contrasting spaces," says project architect Ian McMillan, who is now principal at Studio McMillan.

Another factor that had to be taken into account was Robert's height (he's 6'3"). "Given that we had a set structure to work within, it turned out to be a frequent discussion point," says Christine. "Will he fit in the shower? Are the doors high enough? Will he bump his head on the ceilings when he gets to the top (and in fact also the bottom) of the stairs?"

Locating the master bedroom, ensuite and separate WC on the ground floor, alongside the open-plan living areas, was a big priority. This would create a future-proofed house over one level, thereby ensuring that Christine and Robert could stay in their home should mobility become an issue. Polished concrete flooring with no transition bars, along with ramped access from the street to the property, creates a smooth flow throughout the ground floor spaces, both internally and externally.

As the building occupies a tight, street-facing site and is bordered directly by a shared public lane to the church at the back, creating an appealing outdoor space was a challenge. The solution was to take a bite out of the building to enable the inclusion of a courtyard between both houses, with various glazed connections via sliding doors and windows between inside and out, also allowing south-facing light into the building.

Originally, the plan was to create more outdoor space with a winter garden on the roof for nature lover Christine. This, however, was deemed to be too visible and dominant from the street by the planners. "Instead, we designed a small, south-facing open balcony with great views over Kelso. It's a lovely outdoor space," says Ian. This element was the only real sticking point with the local planning authority, who were very much on board with the final design, viewing it as a way to revitalise a now-disused building and contribute positively to the locality as a result.

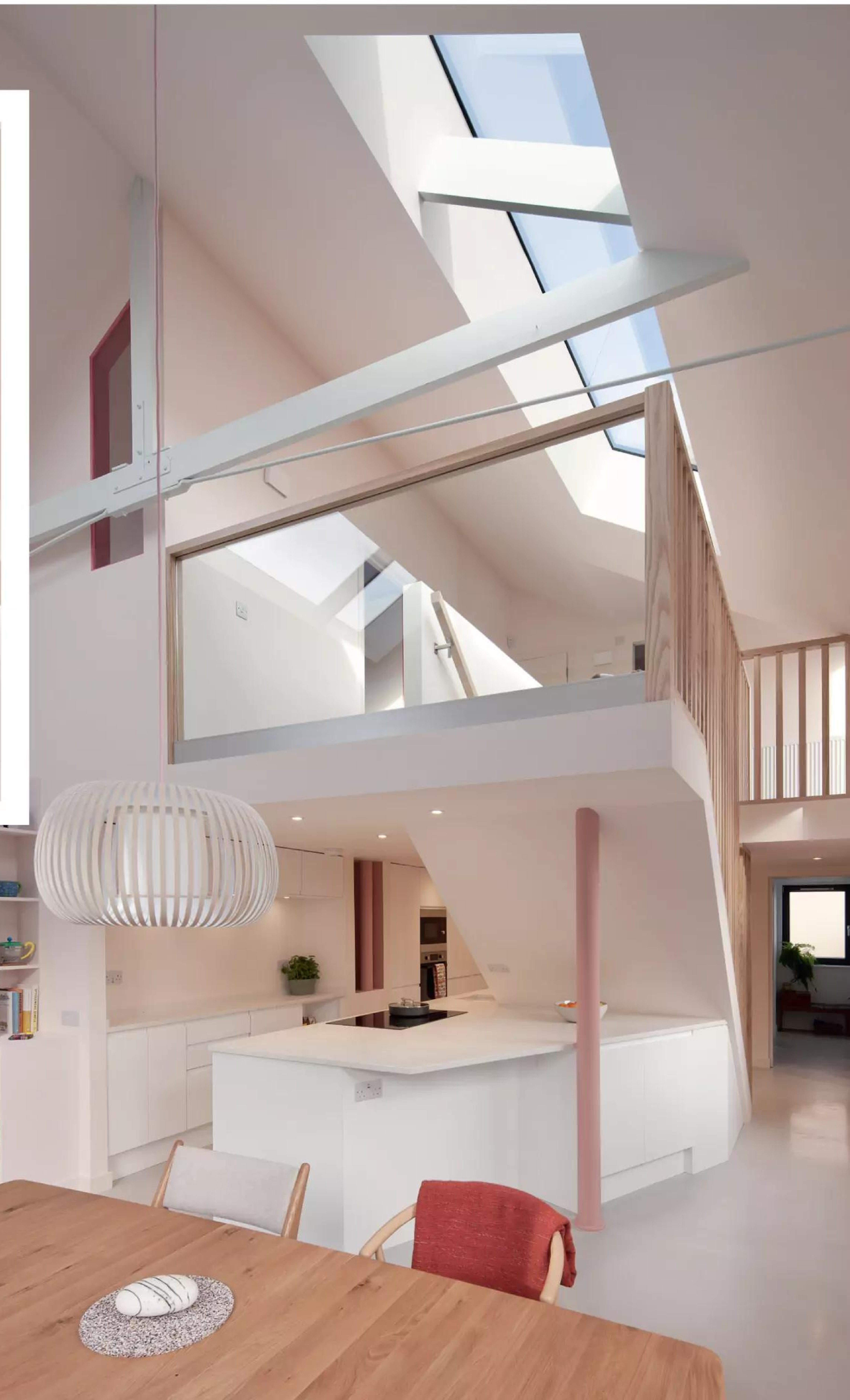
Left: The snug is located off the living room, behind the stove, with an aperture to the kitchen. The display cabinet was bought locally, second hand for £40. Fabric on a back panel was sourced from Malawi, where Robert works during most of the year. The reupholstered chair belonged to Christine's gran. Rob's guitar and Christine's piano add character to the zone

Making savings

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Christine took this new project on in much tougher conditions than she faced during her first build, which ran from May 2018 to November 2019. "I'm very aware that it would have been significantly cheaper to build pre-pandemic," she says. "Like all construction projects, costs were much greater, materials harder to come by, and trades in high demand.

"Very early on I had to spend a significant amount on bulk ordering insulation, knowing that if I left it another few weeks it would cost £1,000s more. Luckily, my relationship with local trades and merchants from my first project continued to be strong, and they supported me as much as possible – highlighting deadlines for ordering and storing materials in their workshops," says Christine.

Insulation was a big upfront cost to beat price hikes, but this aspect could have been up to 25% more if Christine had waited to buy it a few months later, when it was ready to be installed. "I paid



Left & above: The double-height, open-plan living areas benefit from the new overhead glazing. An air source heat pump powers the wet underfloor heating system, set within the polished concrete floors. The home's renewable energy systems also include solar panels and battery storage

Above & right: The kitchen is tucked in under the staircase and looks out over the dining area, through the glass doors to the courtyard. The space is south-facing, so gets light throughout the day with the tracking sun casting shadows and patterns through the balustrade

approximately £8,500 (inclusive of 5% VAT)," she says. "There were other materials, such as plasterboard, that the joiners knew were going to be increasing in price. So, we had an ongoing dialogue about what we were going to need, what elements they knew would experience price changes, and what would be feasible for us to get onto site sooner than we needed it, without it getting in the way."

The kitchen was bought in advance and stored by the joiners, purchased in Howdens annual October sale for £8,000. This price included all the essential appliances: cooker, microwave, fridge freezer, dishwasher and boiling water tap – but excluded worktops.

"I painted the majority of the house myself, which I'm sure saved thousands," says Christine. "I did spend around £1,000 on decorators, who finished each of the double-height spaces – the open-plan kitchen, living, dining zone, plus the master bedroom – and £3,000 on decorating materials, such as the paint itself."

Getting to the finish line

The final design is essentially a two-storey home, increasing the floor area by 45m^2 to 157m^2. The ground level features an open-plan living area, kitchen and diner, plus the primary ensuite bedroom

WE LEARNED...

INVEST IN LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY. We'd planned to install gas central heating, but went for an air source heat pump, 4.46kW of solar photovoltaic panels and a storage battery. The £26,000 installation costs were offset by a £10,000 Home Energy Scotland grant for installing all three elements at the same time.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO SUGGEST ALTERATIONS. The kitchen was originally going to be in a different position, but I asked if it could be tucked in under the stairs, which was more challenging to build. But it's a better use of space and works beautifully, looking out to the courtyard past the dining zone.

ROOFLIGHTS MAKE A LOT OF DIFFERENCE to the head heights upstairs, particularly above the staircase. The treads have quite sharp angles, so the Velux windows were a godsend in terms of getting extra light and headroom in this area.

and a private snug zone. Two bedrooms, the main family bath and shower room, and a terrace feature on the upper level. Christine describes the new, locally-crafted American white ash staircase in the heart of the house as "a beautiful object within a gorgeous space."

The project started on site in 2023, and the main work involved taking down the suspended ceilings and constructing the attic floor with steel supports, timber joists and wooden floorboards. New Velux windows inserted into the existing slate roof brighten the rooms below. A timber main frame with PIR insulation to the external walls, floor and ceiling means that the living spaces can be open plan yet still cosy with minimal heat loss.

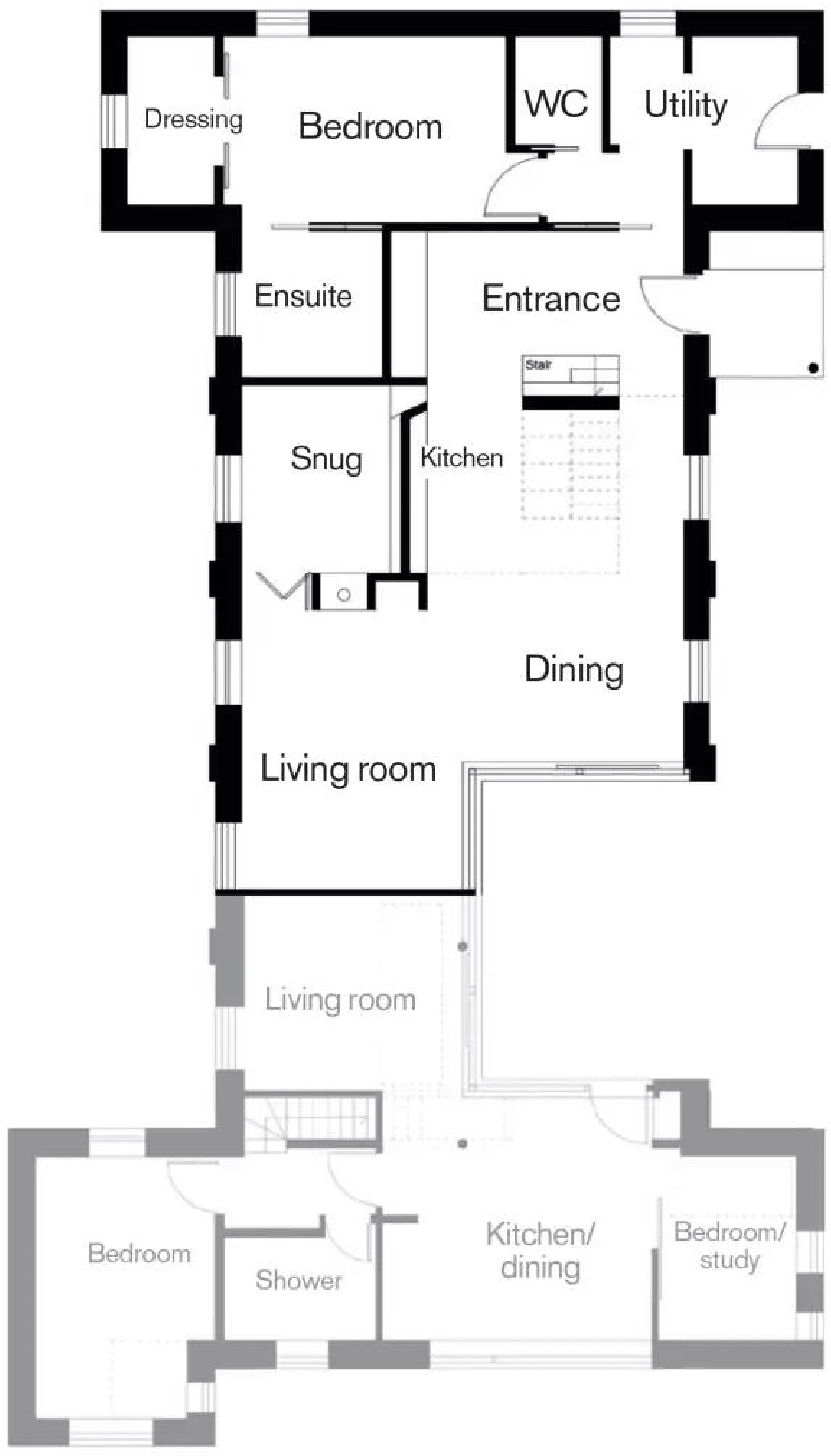
During the build, Christine changed her approach to the energy systems. "I decided to bite the bullet and get a renewable company in to give me a quote. So now we have an air source heat pump, solar

Above left: A pink-framed internal window looks out from the bedroom over the living room, capturing a glimpse of the original beams to create an interesting perspective through the spaces. The aperture was originally designed to be open to the main space, but for acoustics and safety, thickened glass was added. The rooflights are Velux 3-in-1, which became available during the construction phase and have enabled ample daylight in this zone

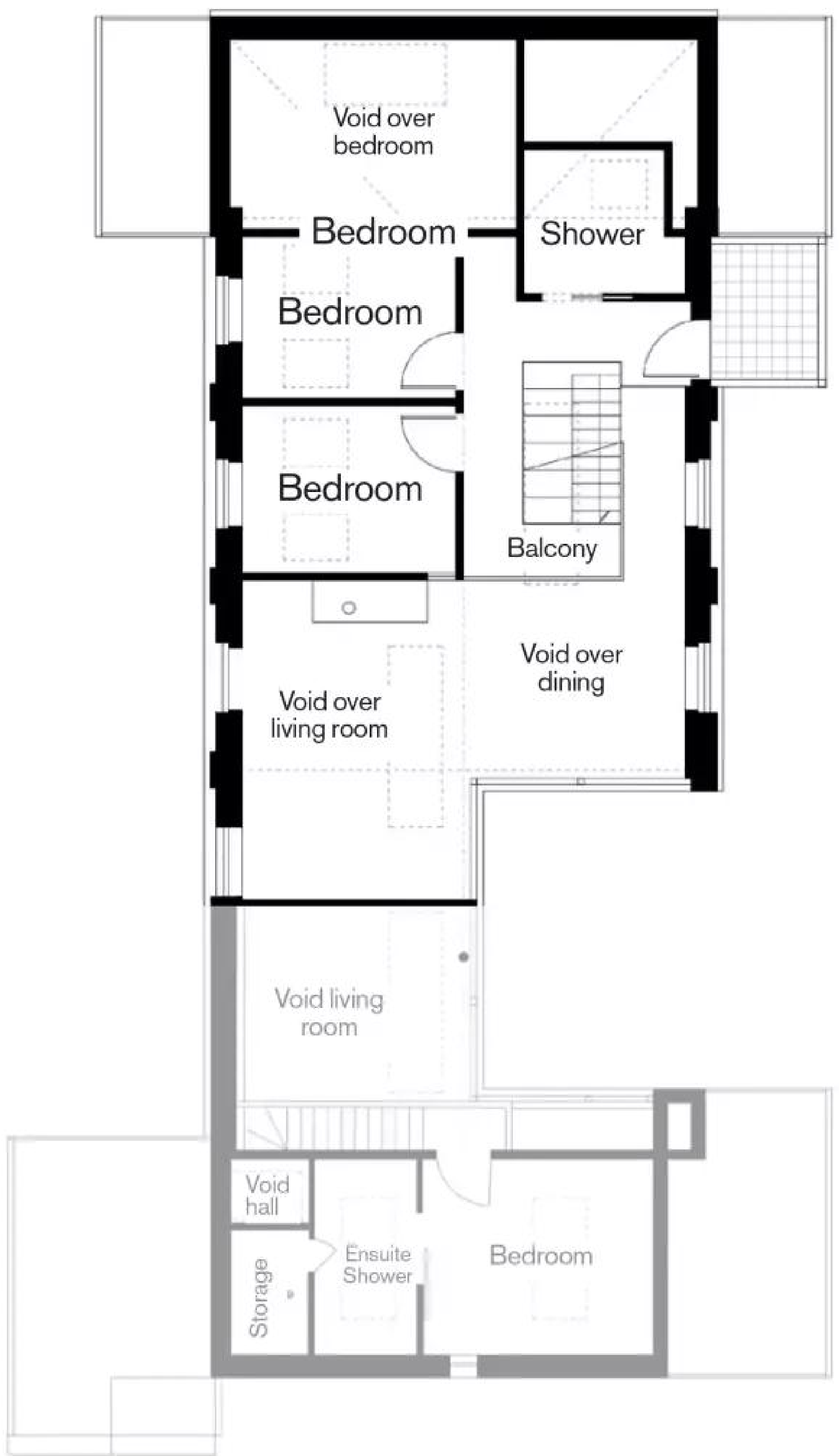
Right: A sleek rooflight and cut-away ceiling create a sense of extra headroom above the staircase

Floor plans

Ground floor


Dressing
Bedroom
WC
Utility
Ensuite
Entrance
Stair
Snug
Kitchen
Dining
Living room
Living room
Bedroom
Shower
Kitchen/
dining
Bedroom/
study

First floor


Void over
bedroom
Bedroom
Shower
Bedroom
Bedroom
Balcony
Void over
dining
Void over
living room
Void living
room
Void
hall
Storage
Ensuite
Shower
Bedroom

The greyed-out sections of this floorplan represent Christine's previous project, a compact conversion to the front section of the church hall. You can explore the ins and outs of that build on Build It's website at **www.self-build.co.uk/hamilton**

Opposite: The family bathroom is on the first floor, in the hipped section to the back of building. The form of the roof creates interesting shapes in the room. A new dormer to the side of the building, clad with zinc and scorched larch externally, accommodates the shower and allows for unrestricted headroom in the bathroom. The cork floor was chosen for its natural finish and because it's warmer underfoot than tiles

Below: The ground floor master bedroom is fully accessible from the main living spaces. Set at the back of building, which is quieter, the vaulted space include a rooflight above the bed with a remote-controlled SONA blind

panels and a storage battery. It adds to the sustainability of the project but also increased our costs," she says. "A modern gas boiler would probably have been about £2,000, but achieving long-term sustainability was important to us."

Christine's savvy approach to project management paid off. "I thought of the build as a full-time job," she says. "I knew it would cost me a lot of money if I used a project manager and I didn't want to use a construction company. I wanted to enlist the same local trades that I used for my first house." She was also very hands-on, scorching the larch cladding for the new dormer herself, for instance, in the same way as she did for her first project.

"I was pregnant during the works so me and the baby spent a lot of time up ladders at the end of the build," says Christine, who went for a pink and green decorative theme for the interior finishes throughout. "Even the large main spaces are a very subtle pink, using Tailor Tack by Farrow & Ball," she says. "Once I thought of that as an idea, I just couldn't shift it, so I decided to roll with it instead!"

Christine describes her new home as "a treasure of light, shapes and colour. When the sun is out you get a beautiful warm glow into the kitchen, dining space and living room. As the sun works its way around the property, the wall colours change tone with the light levels. It's a very quiet, calming and nurturing house."

Project architect Ian McMillan explains how this effect was achieved and offers some design advice: "Don't be afraid of small spaces," he says. "And don't be tempted to overdevelop them, either. This could easily have been a five-bedroom house, but you would lose the sense of space, volume and light that we were able to create."

TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

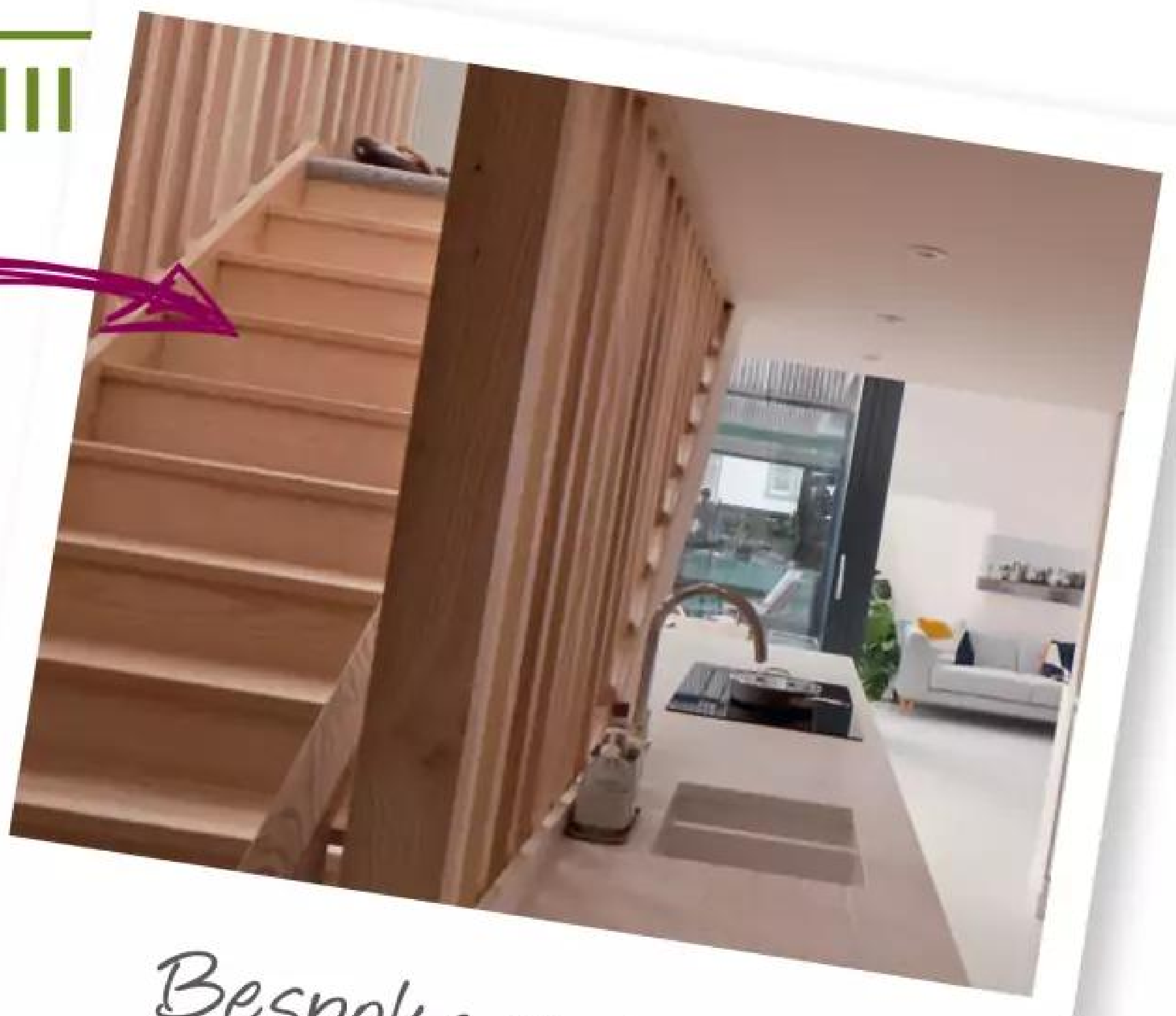
Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£64	3%	£10,000
Foundations	£127	6%	£20,000
External walls & windows	£115	5%	£18,000
Roof structure & covering	£83	4%	£13,000
Internal walls & steelwork	£223	11%	£35,000
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£242	12%	£38,000
Joinery & fitting	£478	23%	£75,000
Plumbing & heating	£446	21%	£70,000
Electrics & solar PV	£146	7%	£23,000
Decorating	£25	1%	£4,000
Professional fees	£95	5%	£15,000
External works	£32	2%	£5,000
Grand total			**£326,000**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

closer look

Flight of fancy…

The staircase is a bespoke commission from a local company, Runciman and Redpath. Located only 12 miles away from the project, it was brought on site by the suppliers and installed by the joiners. The wood is American white ash to ensure minimal knots. Its design and placement is a key feature of the final plan. "Rather than simply putting in another level, we wanted to make it more interesting, like a little streetscape where the flight is part of the architecture and experience of the house, not just a straight route from a to b," says architect Ian. "The idea is that the stair could also be a destination point, so it's wide enough to sit on and use as a social space or read a book. We worked on four different ideas for the design and Christine then chose the final location, as it gives the best views over the living area. You really get a feeling of the scale of the living space from above."



Bespoke staircase

Useful contacts

ARCHITECTS **Studio McMillan** 07484 638858 www.studiomcmillan.com; **Mind-the-Gap Inclusive Design Consultancy** www.mind-the-gap.space JOINERS **Mark & Craig Logan Joinery** 07920 092315 STRUCTURAL ENGINEER **Structural Design Consultants** 01896 664 991 www.structuraldesignconsultants.com WELDER & STEEL ENGINEER **Bowmont Engineering Works** 01573 223159 CLADDING **MH Southern** 01289 307401 www.mhsouthern.co.uk INSULATION **Kingspan** www.kingspan.com RENEWABLES **Energy Systems Scotland** 01896 800 232 www.energysystemsscotland.co.uk ROOFING **Murdoch Kerse Zinc & Copper Roofing** 07514 273155 ROOFLIGHTS **Glazing Vision** 020 4586 0832 www.glazingvision.co.uk TILING **White Rose Tiling** 07728 219048 www.whiterosetiling.co.uk; **Topps Tiles** 0800 783 6262 www.toppstiles.co.uk WINDOWS & EXTERNAL DOORS **Allan Brothers** 01289 334600 www.allanbrothers.co.uk BATHROOM SUITE **Wholesale Domestic Bathrooms** 0344 809 4249 www.wholesaledomestic.com FLOORING **Tapi** 01344 204806 www.tapi.co.uk KITCHEN **Howdens** 01604 876000 www.howdens.com STAIRCASE **Runciman & Redpath** 01835 862964 LIGHTING **John Lewis** www.johnlewis.com; **Lighting Direct** 0345 646 1137 www.lighting-direct.co.uk; **Ikea** www.ikea.com TAP **Quooker** 01617 685900 www.quooker.co.uk PAINT **Lick** www.lick.com; **Little Greene** 01612 300880 www.littlegreene.com **Farrow & Ball** 01202 876141 www.farrow-ball.com UPHOLSTERY **Real Upholsterer** 07570 003010

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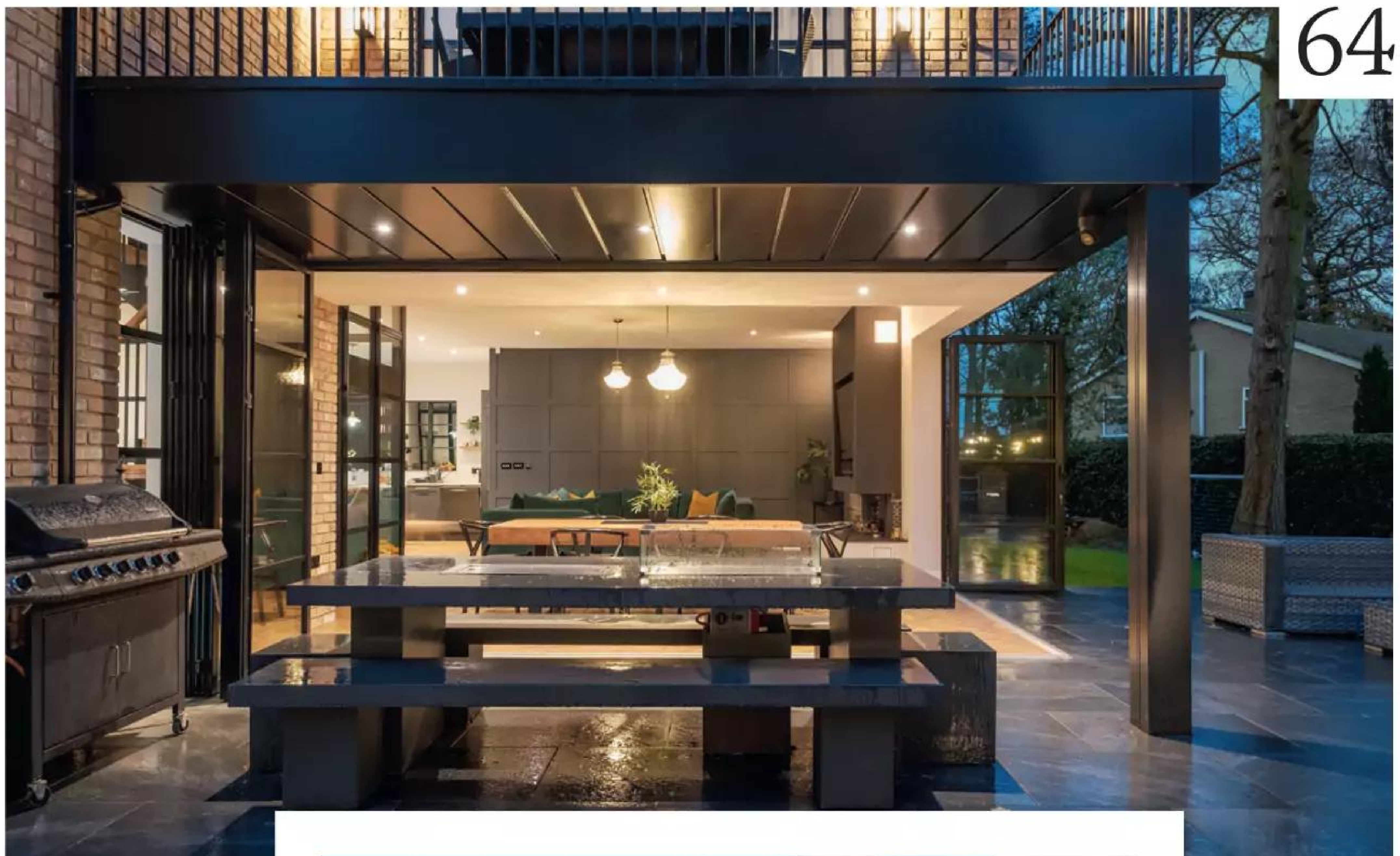
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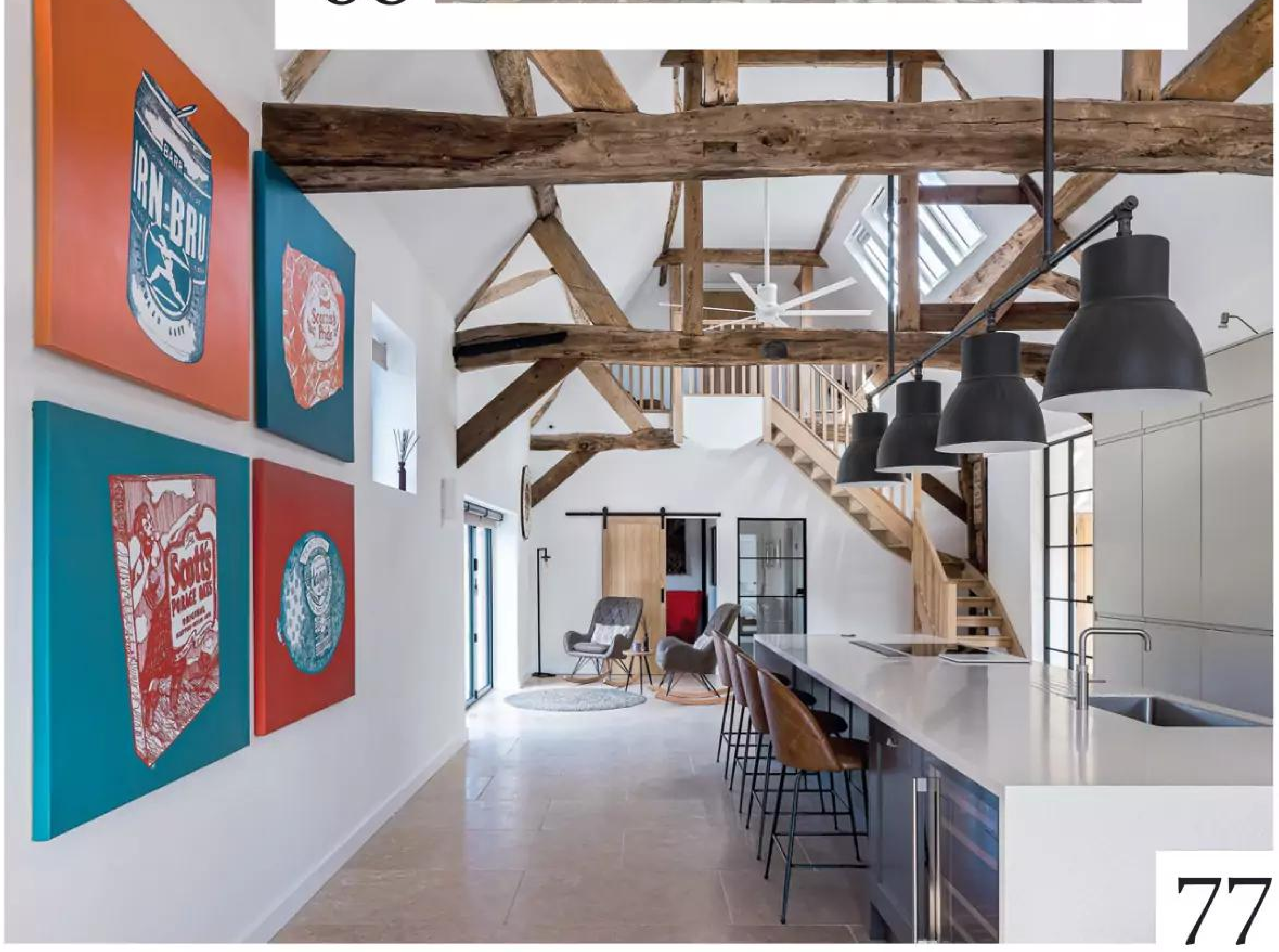
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STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

PACKAGE HOMES

Knowing they wanted a modern design and high levels of energy efficiency, the owners of this home in Kent selected Meisterstueck-Haus as their build partner. Sustainability was key, and the home is built using timber frame with high levels of insulation and airtightness

Whether you want to be hands-on or leave the work to the professionals, we follow the full process for this design and build route – from your first decisions through to move-in day – and explore the key choices you'll make along the way

WORDS ANNA-MARIE DESOUZA

Building your own home is one of life's most rewarding challenges – and for many, the package home route offers the ideal balance of freedom, structure and support. Whether you're hoping to take the reins on site or prefer to hand things over to the experts, package providers offer flexible solutions tailored to different levels of involvement, experience and budget. But with so many options available, knowing where to start – and what to expect – can feel overwhelming.

This step-by-step guide walks you through the full journey, from your first decisions around design and suppliers, through to key choices on construction, project route, performance and sustainability.

1 IS A PACKAGE HOME FOR YOU?

Different self build routes suit different personalities, skillsets and budget types. So, the first question to unpack is whether or not a package home is the right fit for you. This approach appeals to those who would value expert support through the design and core build phases, whether they're new to self build or seasoned pros.

Unlike traditional developments, package homes give you the freedom to select how hands-on you want to be – from overseeing every detail to handing everything over to a turnkey supplier. As a minimum, your contract is likely to include the structural design and weathertight shell to an agreed timescale and price – but there will often be a menu of additional services to choose from.

Many people are drawn to the predictability of fixed-cost packages, while others appreciate the ability to mix-and-match while still receiving expert guidance. Whatever your reason for exploring this route – better budget control, limited time or the desire for professional oversight – it's important to honestly assess your availability, confidence and how much risk you're willing to take on.

2 SELECTING A SUPPLIER

Your choice of package home provider will shape every aspect of your project – from the materials you build with to the overall design and sustainability. The right partner will offer you technical expertise, transparency, good communication and a collaborative approach from the outset.

EXPERT Q&A

SIMON ORRELLS managing director at Frame Technologies, **gives his view on making sustainable choices for your package home**

How can self builders incorporate sustainable materials into their package homes, and what are the most eco-friendly options?

Most clients opting for closed panel, factory-insulated timber frame systems aim for ultra-low U-values and airtightness. This delivers energy-efficient homes, with one point of contact for the building fabric. Pre-insulated panels create long-lasting, sustainable houses that are cosy and efficient. Designed to deliver excellent thermal and airtightness properties, and manufactured in controlled environments, these systems guarantee performance and minimise waste. Closed panel timber frame packages can achieve U-values from 0.18 down to 0.09 W/m^2K.

Natural insulation is an option, too. For instance, we can install any insulation into our TechVantage system – from glasswool to sheep's wool, hemp or recycled paper.

How do package home suppliers help self builders make environmentally conscious decisions?

Our role is to advise on the best system to suit the client's design and thermal efficiency goals, based on individual specifications. We would always recommend building to best value, not cheapest cost. Working on a bespoke basis, we consider energy performance, wall thickness, floor area, cost and the self builder's desired sustainability levels. Building to the highest levels of thermal efficiency and quality you can afford will stand you in good stead for the future.

What are the most common mistakes self builders make?

One mistake we see time and again is when client's fail to engage the package provider or timber frame manufacturer at the start of the project. Timber frame companies are often able to assist with design, meeting Building Regs, planning challenges and more – it's not just about supplying and manufacturing the timber frame. They can help you reach your efficiency goals.

"Quality customer service plays a significant role in ensuring that a self builder enjoys the necessary guidance, assistance and troubleshooting throughout the process of creating their dream home," says Gareth Edmunds, design director at Welsh Oak Frame. Appointing a supplier that has a reputation for good customer support will minimise potential logistical issues and delays, while giving you the benefit of access to their knowledge, advice and practical solutions for a smoother experience from start to finish.

Before engaging a firm, it's worth doing some research into their past projects. Look beyond the pretty pictures; read client testimonials and – perhaps most importantly – visit completed homes and show houses. Speaking face-to-face with previous customers can give you valuable insight into how the company operates in real life. Did they deliver what they said they would? Were they accommodating when the client changed their mind? Has the build quality stood the test of time?

Meeting the team in person to discuss your project is crucial, too – this way, you can gauge how well they understand your goals and whether your working styles align. Make sure they're clear about what's included in their service and how they handle responsibilities, particularly if you're not opting for a full turnkey route.

3 DRAWING UP THE SCHEME

The package house route gives you flexibility over how you organise the design. Some providers will work with your own plans and/or the architect of your

MARK WATTS

John and Lucy Hardwick chose a turnkey package with Oakwrights for their beautiful oak frame home, drawn up by Pete Tonks of PJT Design (www.pjtdesign.co.uk). Influenced by conservation officer requirements, their original vision evolved into a more traditional design that still delivered light-filled living. With Pete's brother David as project manager, the turnkey route offered peace of mind and a high-quality finish. Despite snowy setbacks, the oak frame and encapsulating insulation panels were erected swiftly. The result is a stunning, energy-efficient home perfectly suited to the couple's lifestyle and location

This turnkey development by WeberHaus showcases timeless architecture, premium materials and flawless German craftsmanship. Expansive windows flood the interiors with light, while terraces and balconies offer breathtaking views and a seamless indoor-outdoor flow. The ground floor features a grand entrance hall, elegant dining space, open-plan kitchen, conservatory, and library. Upstairs, the 34m² master suite includes a luxurious bathroom and dressing room

EXPERT Q&A

HELEN NEEDHAM
head of architecture at Oakwrights, **explores what's involved in the design phase of a package build**

Q What key design considerations should self builders have in mind before approaching a package home supplier?
Before engaging with a provider, self builders should establish a clear vision, including budget, site constraints, and long-term needs. Setting a realistic budget enables the architectural designer to guide efficient choices and highlight cost-driving elements. Think about overall style – whether a simple barn or intricate multi-gabled design – as this impacts affordability and build complexity.

Q How much design flexibility do package homes offer?
At Oakwrights, we design bespoke homes tailored to each client's vision. From traditional manor houses to contemporary homes or cottages, our team brings ideas to life. However, planning policy and local vernacular will always influence design. In conservation areas, planners may require traditional aesthetics or use a Design Code, while other locations might welcome contemporary styles. One client, for example, adjusted a barn-style home to use stone to align with local preferences.

Q Are there any common design pitfalls to avoid?
One of the most frequent mistakes you'll see is when a design is developed solely for the owners' current needs. Many of our clients aim to future-proof their homes with adaptable spaces, such as a ground-floor bedroom that can serve as a home office, or an annexe for family members in later years.

Another common oversight is underestimating the space that's required for plant rooms to house essential high-performance home technologies, such as mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) systems or the manifolds for underfloor heating. A critical mistake is putting off key decisions. Late-stage changes can significantly increase costs and disrupt project timelines.

Q What's your design process?
We can offer custom build options or begin with site visits, concept sketches, and cost estimates. After design approval, we handle planning and produce technical drawings, ensuring a smooth journey from vision to build.

choice, while others also have the option of in-house designers who can create a fully bespoke scheme that works seamlessly with their structural system. Many can also adapt pattern books of their pre-existing plans to better suit your site or personal requirements, which can be a cost-effective route if there's something you like.

Be upfront about how much creative input you want – and make sure your supplier is able to support that level of involvement. "Design fees with a package home supplier are usually lower than going to an independent architect. That's because these companies rely on a successful design becoming the clincher for the build contract," says Gareth. "There is also the huge advantage of the designer having in depth specialist knowledge of working with a particular material, such as oak frame, so they will know how to get the very best out of the design."

Timber building systems – including timber frame, structural insulated panels (SIPs) and oak – are the most prevalent in the package home market. These offsite methods align well with the idea of agreeing a detailed spec, cost and schedule before you hit the button on production. But you'll also find suppliers who offer the likes of insulated concrete formwork (ICF) and traditional masonry. Each manufacturer's product is different, so even if you have a preference for a certain system, it's still important to investigate several suppliers to see how their offerings align with your vision and budget.

CASE STUDY

A dual Dan-Wood dream home

When Jill Wilson set out to build her new home in the Suffolk village of Thorndon, she turned to Dan-Wood for a full turnkey solution that would deliver high quality, efficiency and peace of mind. She chose the spacious two-storey Park 139E, a 146m², four-bedroom home designed to maximise natural light and provide flexible space for hobbies and fitness.

Jill was drawn to Dan-Wood's fixed cost model, the ability to customise layouts and the confidence of a 20-year structural warranty. "I needed space for gym equipment and creative hobbies, so one of the bedrooms became a workout room. I also swapped walk-in wardrobes for ensuites and requested sliding doors to optimise space," she explains. The entire build, from start to finish, took just 10 weeks – delivering exceptional quality without the stress of managing multiple trades.

When Jill's 89-year-old mother's health declined, the prospect of co-living on the same plot became a practical and emotional priority. Jill chose the single-storey Perfect 112E bungalow from Dan-Wood's range – a compact, accessible home ideal for independent living. "My mother was thrilled to watch her new house being built from the ground up. It's close enough that I can keep an eye on her, but she still enjoys her independence," says Jill. "When we moved in, it felt like all our Christmases had come at once." Together, the two homes create a unique multigenerational living solution – beautifully designed, expertly constructed and tailored to the family's needs.

4 SUSTAINABILITY & EFFICIENCY

Creating a low-energy, low-carbon home is a fundamental goal for many self builders – and it's something you need to make choices on from the outset. Package homes are uniquely positioned to deliver excellent performance, offering systems and processes that can significantly reduce environmental impact while enhancing energy efficiency and minimising long-term running costs.

Many suppliers now prioritise the use of renewable and responsibly sourced materials, with timber systems leading the way, thanks to their low embodied carbon. When paired with FSC-certified wood and eco-conscious insulation, timber building methods offer a strong foundation for a low-impact home. Alternatives such as SIPs and ICF also perform exceptionally well, combining impressive structural strength – which can enable interesting design features – with the highest standards of built-in thermal efficiency.

Sustainability-wise, offsite manufacture can play a crucial role in reducing waste and improving quality. Factory-cut components are produced with precision, minimising material offcuts and ensuring consistent detailing. This not only leads to faster builds and fewer site errors, but also allows critical elements of your spec, such as airtightness and insulation, to be built in from the outset.

Airtight construction is central to reducing heat loss and improving comfort. Systems like timber frame, SIPs and ICF are often engineered to achieve high airtightness standards, creating a well-sealed envelope that performs from day one. To maintain healthy airflow, many suppliers offer packages that include mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR). These systems circulate fresh air while retaining heat, boosting both energy efficiency and the quality of your indoor environment, and helping to prevent issues like condensation and mould.

Remember that sustainable performance isn't just about insulation and technology – it's also about smart design. A knowledgeable supplier will help you make key decisions early, such as orienting the house for passive solar gain, planning window placements for daylight control and incorporating shading where necessary.

5 THE BUILD ROUTE

Once you've chosen your supplier and site, it's time to decide how much of the scheme you want to manage. This is your build route – and it shapes everything from your involvement level to the project timeline.

If you're confident and experienced, a structural design and supply route offers maximum control. Your supplier delivers the technical plans and manufactures the kit, while you take full responsibility for on-site construction, hiring builders, trades and managing the budget.

Want a bit more support? A shell build sees the supplier erect the weathertight structure – typically the insulated walls, roof, floors, internal partitions and sometimes the

Architect Peter Mouncey and partner Diana built Westfield, a 300m² off-grid SIPs home in rural Northumberland, aiming to create an exemplar of sustainable living. They chose a SIPs design, fabrication and on site installation package with SIPS@Clays, with the structure erected in just two weeks. The airtight home features solar panels, a wind turbine, triple glazing, MVHR and a bioethanol stove. With breathtaking views, smart monitoring and an EPC A-rating, the couple's eco-conscious build proves what's possible with vision, careful design, and precision-engineered construction

windows – before handing the rest over to you. This accelerates progress and allows you to focus on the internal and external fit-out, while benefitting from their input during the most technically complex phase.

The design, supply and erect route goes a step further, with the supplier completing the planning design, technical drawings and assembling the structure on site. Once it's weathertight, you resume control of finishing trades. This is a popular choice for those who want their provider to support them through a bigger chunk of the journey.

Finally, turnkey is the most hands-off approach. Your supplier manages everything from design to completion. You'll still make early decisions on layout, spec and finishes, but they'll take care of the rest – handing you a ready-to-live-in home that's bespoke to your requirements.

6 FINANCE & CONTRACTS

With your build route and supplier confirmed, attention turns to finance and contracts. Package homes can be easier to finance than traditional self builds, particularly if you're working with a recognised supplier and clear payment stages are in place. Your provider should always detail how and when payments are to be made, whether you're funding the build through savings and equity or using a specialist self build mortgage.

Make sure your contract fully outlines what is and isn't included in your package. Among the key areas to clarify

CASE STUDY

An oak barn in the Swansea countryside

Gail and Mike McCarry had always dreamed of building an oak-framed barn, but it wasn't until a disused farm in a Swansea conservation area came up for sale that the dream began to take shape. Initially unsure if they could afford their dream, a visit to Welsh Oak Frame – and the home of its founder, Paul Edmunds – convinced them it was possible.

The couple purchased part of the farm plot with friends to share costs, and soon submitted a planning application to rebuild the site's 1.5-storey cowshed. Conservation area status demanded a sympathetic design using stone cladding, wood frame windows and a barn-style layout. Despite budget constraints and planning restrictions on glazing, Welsh Oak helped the owners achieve a stunning, light-filled barn thanks to a dramatic double-height living space. The McCarrys sacrificed a fifth bedroom to accommodate this, but gained a home full of character and volume. To balance cost and aesthetics, Welsh Oak used a central oak frame supported by softwood elements, with stone and larch cladding completing the exterior.

The frame was erected in just eight snowy days, then wrapped in SIPs for energy efficiency. The barn also features underfloor heating, solar panels, a rainwater harvesting system and landscaping in reclaimed stone. Built in just 10 months, the home went on to win an LABC Building Excellence Award. "We've renovated a dozen houses, but this is our favourite," says Gail. "The oak, the warmth, the way it feels – it's everything we hoped for. And Welsh Oak Frame made it all possible."

THIS IS OUR HAPPY PLACE

are design, materials, assembly and project management responsibilities. A good contract will leave no room for surprises, outlining both parties' obligations at each stage.

If you're self-managing part of the build, ensure you fully understand where the supplier's role ends and yours starts, including around site prep, insurance, utilities and handover.

7 THE PHYSICAL BUILD

With plans finalised, contracts in place and your plot prepared, your project moves into its most exciting phase: the build. If you've chosen a supplier that handles structural work – or the full turnkey solution – they'll manage delivery and coordination of their teams.

Generally, you'll be responsible for preliminaries, groundworks and foundations. Depending on your build route, this stage may be entirely in their hands, or you might be stepping in once the house shell is complete. Regardless, clear communication with your supplier is key.

If you're taking the reins from here, this is where your role becomes more active. You'll be coordinating follow-on trades, from electricians and plumbers to decorators and floor fitters. Having a detailed project plan and budget tracking system in place will help keep things on schedule and to budget. Some package home suppliers offer information packs to help smooth this part of the journey.

The fit-out is also the stage that minor delays or design tweaks can have a significant knock-on effect. Weather, site access and materials availability might shift timelines, so it's important to allow for a little flexibility. A reputable provider will work with you to problem-solve efficiently, keeping the project moving while protecting build quality.

8 COMPLETION

Reaching completion is a milestone worth celebrating. On turnkey projects, you should expect your supplier to walk you through a formal handover of the finished house. This includes snagging (identifying and fixing minor defects), ensuring all Building Regs and certificates are signed off, and connecting the final utilities. You'll also receive an operations manual, warranties for materials and systems, and guidance on maintenance.

If you're managing interior fit-out yourself, handover of the superstructure is your cue to step into gear. Some suppliers offer a near dry shell finish, enabling immediate internal progress without waiting on windows, roofing or external finishes. From here, your timeline to moving in depends on your specification, the pace of work and your project management skills.

It's a good idea to document everything at handover – from meter readings to delivery notes – and keep a central record of guarantees and contacts. Once you're in, there may be a brief adjustment period, as systems like MVHR settle in, and you learn the rhythms of your new home.

CONTACTS **Dan-Wood** 01896 752271 www.dan-wood.co.uk **English Brothers** 01945 427985 www.eb-bespoke.co.uk **Frame Technologies** 01544 267124 www.frametechnologies.co.uk **Meistersteuck-Haus** 01235 227270 www.meisterstueck.com **Oakwrights** 01432 353353 www.oakwrights.co.uk **Scandia-Hus** 01342 838060 www.scandia-hus.co.uk **SIPS@Clays** 01756 799498 www.clays.com **WeberHaus** 01233 802026 www.weberhaus.co.uk **Welsh Oak Frame** 01686 688000 www.welshoakframe.com

EXPERT Q&A

NICK BLUNT
designer at WeberHaus,
explains the ins and outs of the turnkey package home process

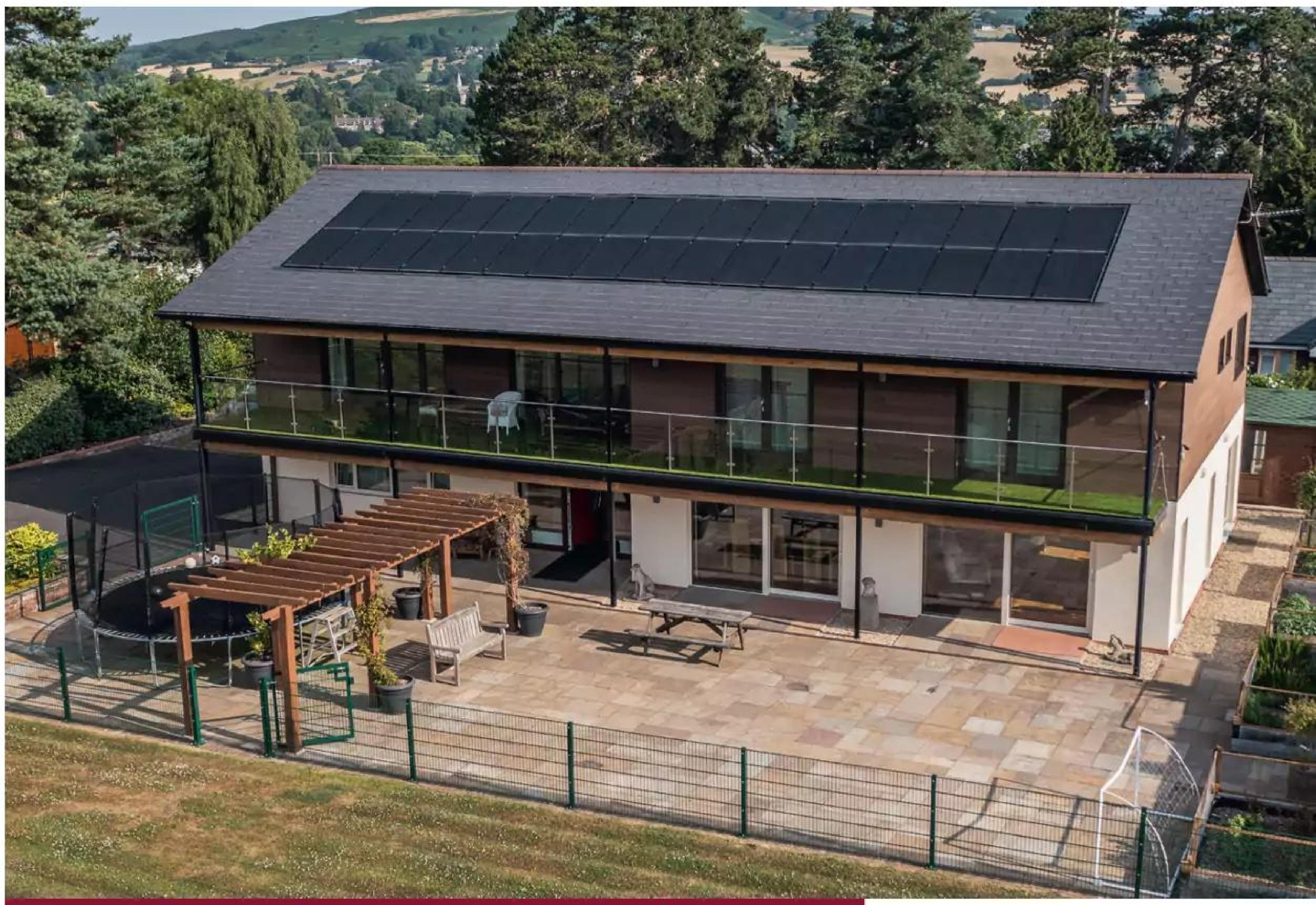
Q What does the turnkey process involve when building a package home?
WeberHaus defines a full turnkey build as completion above ground, typically excluding groundworks, kitchens, and light fittings – giving UK customers the flexibility to source these themselves. German kitchens are available if preferred. The main benefit is a fully-managed project from a single source in Germany. Our clients visit WeberHaus HQ for three to four days to select finishes with an interior designer. This expert guidance ensures clarity, consistency, and confidence, covered by workmanship guarantees.

While going for a turnkey home build does carry a premium, it offers peace of mind and reduces your personal risk. Unlike managing subcontractors, the turnkey route ensures you have one point of responsibility throughout.

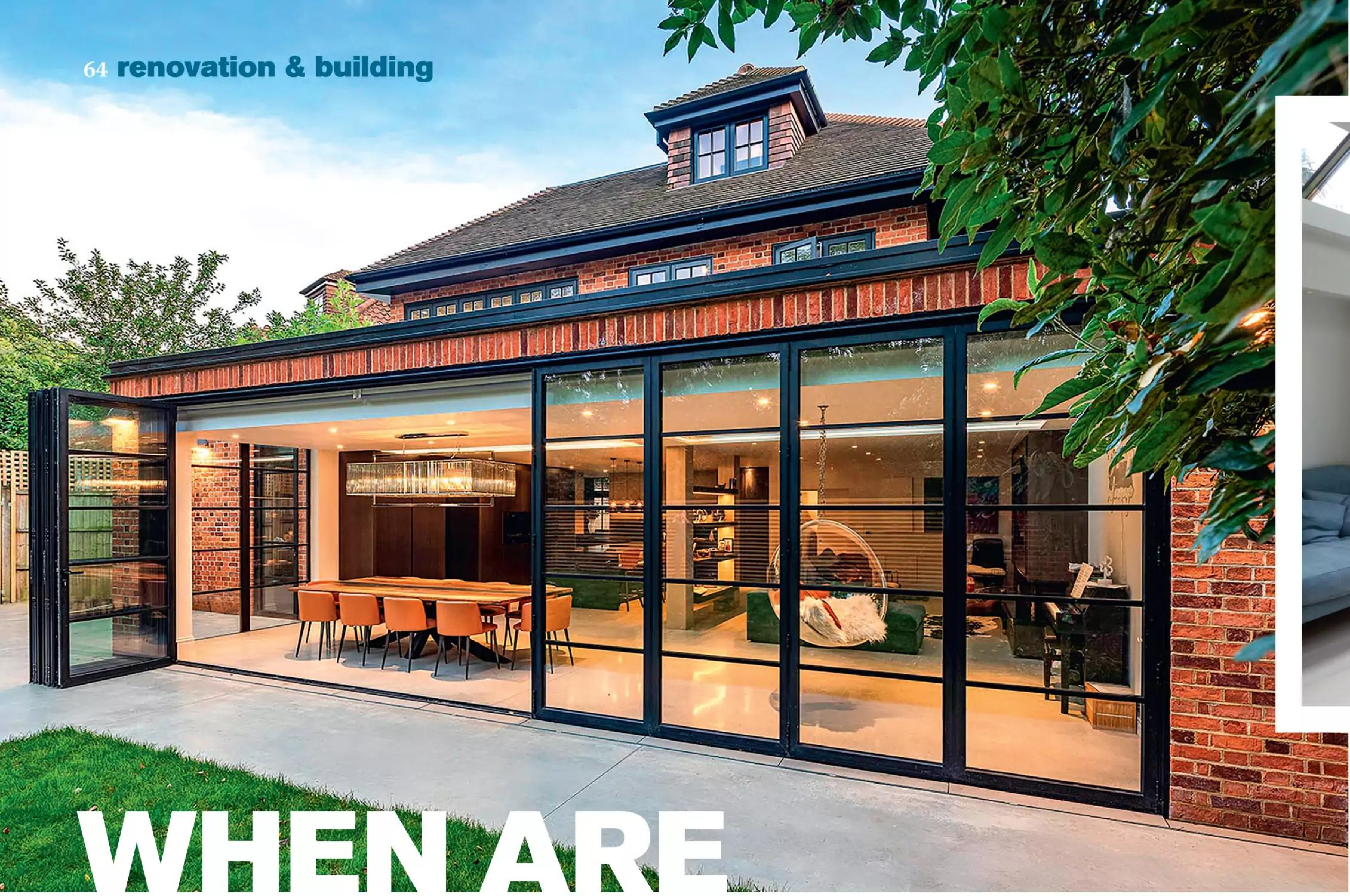
Q How does this approach benefit project timelines and coordination?
All coordination is handled from the UK, but homes are manufactured at our German facilities. Clients can visit anytime, but one planning visit is typical. Once complete, components are transported to the UK and assembled on site super-fast. Interior work then follows, completed by WeberHaus experts.

From design to delivery, timelines range from several months to two years, depending on the complexity of the project. Once on site, the weathertight frame is erected in three to seven days. German offsite manufacturing ensures accuracy to the millimetre, with dry materials and controlled conditions enhancing quality.

Q How much customisation is available?
Every WeberHaus is bespoke. From structural layout and facade to finishes and fittings, everything is customisable. We offer a wide materials selection, or you can use your own suppliers. No element is fixed – just tailored to your needs.



Frank and Pauline Mace built Tanglewood, a stunning $388m^2$ five-bedroom home in Herefordshire, using Frame Technologies' TechVantage E timber frame system. Inspired by Passivhaus principles, the couple achieved outstanding energy efficiency with U-values of 0.10 W/m^2K, an EPC rating of A, and an airtightness score of 1.04. Designed for comfort and future-proofing, the home includes an air source heat pump, MVHR and greywater system



WHEN ARE BIFOLDS BEST?

Scarlett Deamer takes a look at this eye-catching glazing style to help you decide if it's the right fit for your project

Above: This project in Richmond, by Grabex Windows, features an entire wall of bifolds, spanning 9.2m across and 2.8m in height. It comes with a master door in the middle for easy access, flush threshold and two matching picture windows in the corner to maximise natural light

Glazing can make a huge impact on the spaces you create. With so many styles available, trying to work out your best option is no easy feat. Bifold doors remain a popular choice due to their stylish appearance, practicality and the fact that they can offer clear openings of over 90%. But are they right for you? Here, I'm delving into all things bifold, exploring what kind of projects suit this system, how to get the performance and functionality you're after, and what to budget for a high-quality installation.

Design considerations

When you start planning the glazing arrangement for your dream home, there are some practical concerns you need to address to see if bifolds would work for you. Due to the way the doors operate, you'll need a decent span to take full advantage of the system. "We would recommend having an opening of three metres as a minimum, as the panes can take up a fair amount of space when they are stacked," says Rebecca Clayon, director of Sieger Systems. A decent sized opening will draw in natural light and extend living spaces, while ensuring you benefit from the fully-open aperture that bifolds are known for.

The size of the panels is also an important factor to consider. "Glass that is wider than 1,000mm can be extremely difficult to handle when being installed and could cause long-term stress on the ironmongery," says Morten Wendt, director at Lacuna. Therefore, you'll get the best longevity out of bifold doors if the panels are under 1m in width. This does mean there will be more visible framing compared to sliding doors – so you'll need to weigh up whether having the unrivalled clear openings that bifolds can deliver is more important for your self build or extension project than minimising sightlines.

Materials & finishes

Bifolds are available in a range of materials. Aluminium, timber and alu-clad versions are the most prevalent choices, offering a great balance of performance versus cost – although steel and PVCu options are also available. To add a personal touch, many systems can also be finished in bespoke RAL colours or stains.

If you're upgrading an older property or creating a heritage-inspired new build, consider opting for plant-on glazing bars to complement the architecture. "Glazing bars can offer a lovely feature for more traditional homes," says Rebecca, "and since they're added retrospectively, they don't create thermal breaks in the panes."

Left: A Sieger Systems Legacy bifold, is the centrepiece of this house renovation in London. Elegant glazing bars give the system a heritage steel look. A four-panel configuration was chosen, with a three-panel stack and a single action hinged door for quick access to the garden

they're required will give you flexibility to fit in with the project's schedule."

It's a good idea to ask a glazing supplier to look over your plans as early as possible, so they can start providing advice on viability, starting prices and tweaks that could enhance the finished install. This way, as your plan develops, you will benefit from a good understanding of what the supplier can offer you in terms of materials, costs and lead times – as well as guidance on technical issues, such as where the frame should sit within the thermal envelope, cladding returns and other considerations.

Aluminium is a go-to choice for bifolds, as its inherent strength enables the slimmest sightlines. It's also very low maintenance – although there will always be some upkeep required. "Aluminium frames tend to require some silicone spray to the hardware and regular checks and cleaning of the tracks to make sure you remove any debris that could potentially damage the mechanism," says Joanna Smith, marketing manager at Grabex Windows.

Composite systems offer a mix of materials, providing you with the warmth of wood alongside the sleek, modern appearance of metal. This style of door is typically made from engineered timber, with an aluminium shell mounted to the exterior surface. The wood finish is left exposed inside and stained or painted to your preference.

Fully-timber bifolds deliver bags of character and very good thermal efficiency. However, they will require periodic reapplication of stains and coatings when being used externally, in order to help maintain their appearance and performance in the long term.

Costs

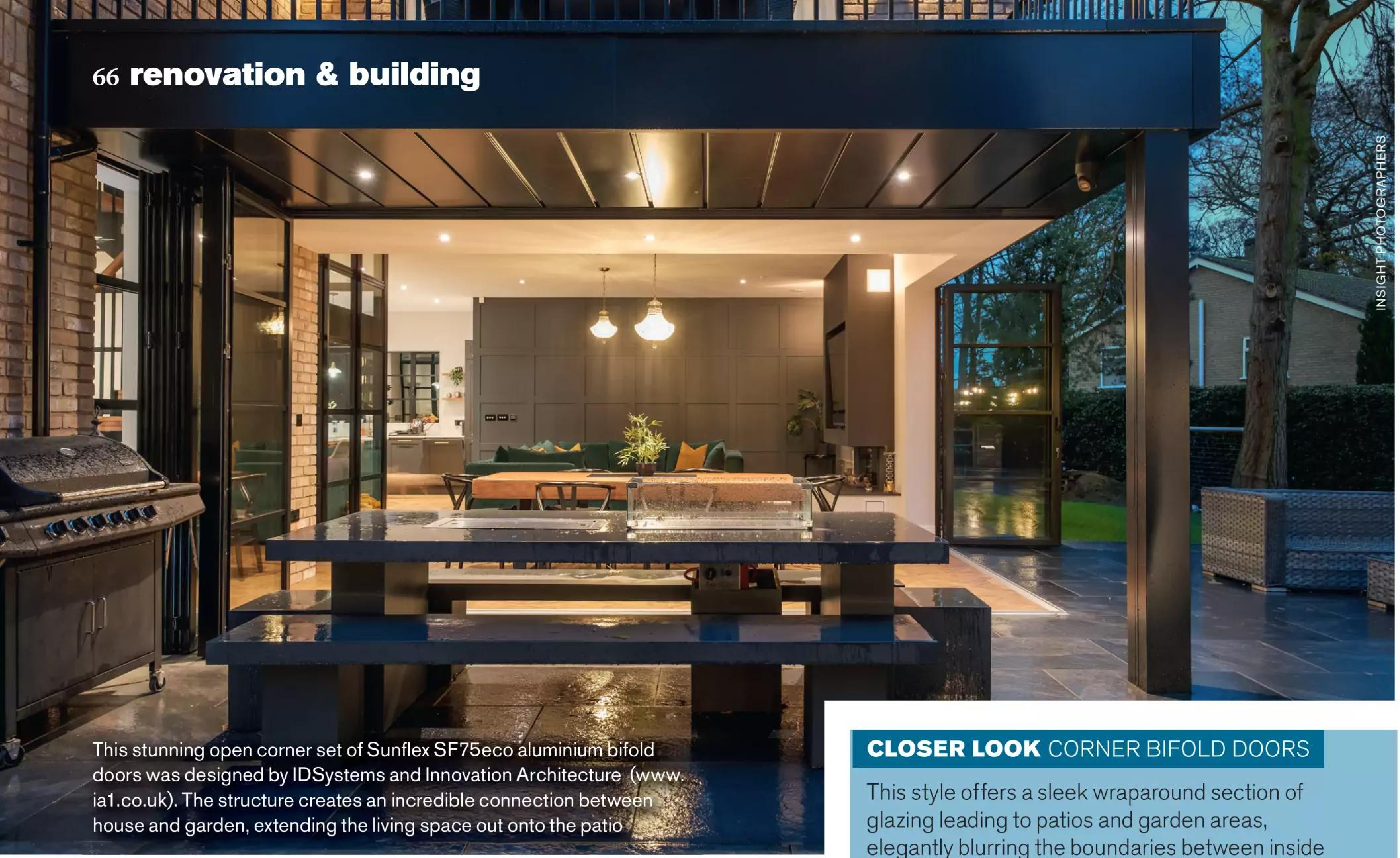
Bifolds tend to be more expensive than sliding doors, largely because of the extra hardware and additional profiles. "A good quality bifold system could start at £1,000 +VAT per panel," says Matt. It won't come as any surprise that the more bespoke you go, the more you can expect to pay. Wider expanses of glass with fewer breaks will cost considerably more than modestly partitioned bifolds, for instance, while the fact alu-clad systems use two materials will always put them at the premium end.

If you're keen to achieve the best possible thermal performance, you'll want to invest in a quality set of bifolds that is specified to match your expectations. "For those who are seeking ultra energy-efficient doors and decide to go for triple glazing rather than double, you will find the cost is higher," says Edward Stobart, technical sales manager at IDSystems. "Any upgrades to the hardware and insulation to meet Passivhaus standard will also cause an uplift in price," says Joanna.

Below: This project features an elegant run of Kloeber's aluminium bifold doors set within an alu-clad glazed gable. The wide span of glazing reflects the scenic backdrop, elegantly merging the house with its landscape

When to start exploring

Lead times for glazing can vary hugely based on what material, size, colour, thermal properties and service you specify. As with most products, the more custom your design, the longer it will take to produce your system. Supply-and-install services are a handy option for homeowners, as it means there is only one point of contact responsible for the finished result. "Generally, for a supply-only set of timber bifolds, the lead time can be as short as three or four weeks, but if installation is required, it's usually eight to 10 weeks," says Matt Higgs, managing director at Kloeber. "Placing your order for bifolds 12-14 weeks before



This stunning open corner set of Sunflex SF75eco aluminium bifold doors was designed by IDSystems and Innovation Architecture (www.ia1.co.uk). The structure creates an incredible connection between house and garden, extending the living space out onto the patio

INSIGHT PHOTOGRAPHERS

Energy efficiency

A glazing system's ability to retain heat and resist thermal energy transfer is quantified through its U-value rating. The lower this number, the better the product's insulation properties and the more heat it will keep inside your home. Good gas-filled double glazing will easily meet Building Regs, with triple-glazed doors capable of achieving Passivhaus standards of efficiency. But, it's not just the glass that impacts heat transfer. "Nowadays, the majority of heat loss is through the frames," says Edward. "So, look for a system with an advanced multi-chamber thermal break to prevent cold bridging."

If you're installing bifolds in an existing house, they'll almost certainly need trickle vents to meet Building Regulations related to air quality. The big downside of this is that you're essentially putting holes through your wall that will allow heat to leak out. In a new build or whole-house retrofit, you can control this aspect with mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (MVHR), negating the need for trickle vents.

Below: Timber bifolds, like this one by Lacuna, add warmth and rustic charm to a space. While they can be used as external doors, here a run has been installed internally to create a flexible, broken-plan space

Are bifolds right for me?

If space is an issue or you have budget constraints, bifolds might not be the most suitable choice for you. "If you don't have ample room, a French door can perform a similar job at a much cheaper cost," explains Morten. Indeed, for smaller apertures, French doors can deliver more-or-less the same level of access as a bifold and don't need to be fully opened to allow you to pass through. Once you go beyond the typical width a set of French doors can manage and assuming you have sufficient internal or external space to house the stacked doors, bifolds become a go-to choice to create expansive openings that connect inside and out in a way you can't get with other products on the market.

CLOSER LOOK CORNER BIFOLD DOORS

This style offers a sleek wraparound section of glazing leading to patios and garden areas, elegantly blurring the boundaries between inside and out. Fundamentally, two runs of glazed doors are installed that then meet at a corner and unfurl to open up the building. Such a wow-factor feature can be achieved through two methods – by opting for a cantilevered construction, or by including a corner post. Early engagement with your designer and chosen glazing supplier is vital to ensure you get the right look at a price you can afford.

Creating a cantilevered corner will require cranked structural beams to support the whole of the opening. This will provide an uninterrupted corner, with no break in your access into the garden once the bifolds are concertinaed back. Achieving this requires specific calculations from a structural engineer. This and the cranked steelwork will add significant cost to a project.

A cheaper alternative is to include a supporting post in the design, installed either inside or outside the corner to support the structure overhead. In this instance, a much smaller steel is needed, and the post could be installed to meet the exact position where the two bifold systems come together, so it's almost hidden when the doors are closed.

CONTACTS

Grabex Windows 020 8685 9651 www.grabex.co.uk **IDSystems** 01603 408804 www.idsystems.com **IQ Glass** 01494 722880 www.iqglassuk.com **Kloeber** 01487 740044 www.kloeber.co.uk **Lacuna** 0330 0010 552 www.lacuna-bifold.co.uk **Sieger Systems** 01494 722882 www.siegersystems.co.uk

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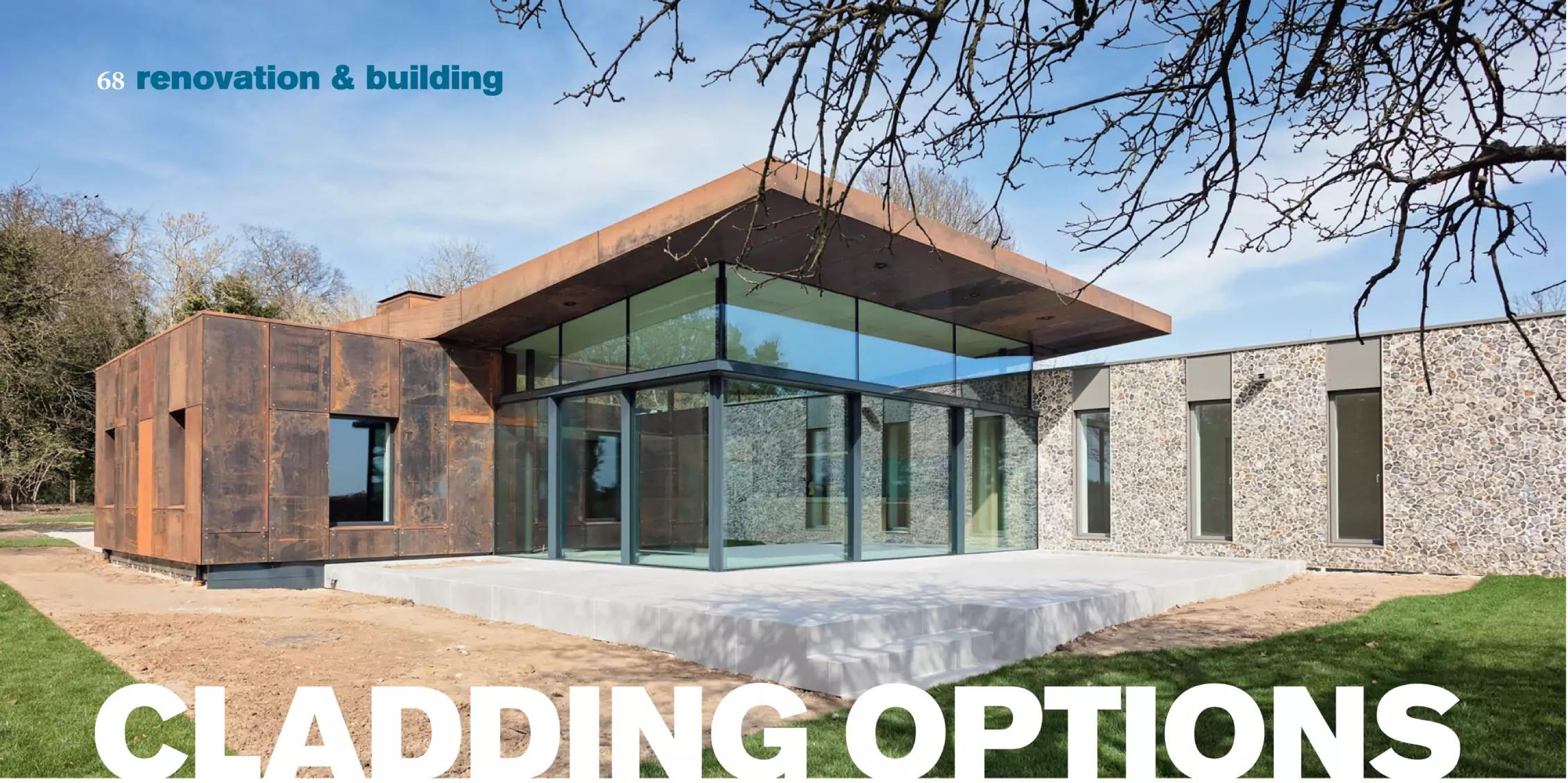


CLADDING OPTIONS FOR TIMBER HOMES

Timber construction lends itself to a range of exterior finishes to achieve the look and performance you're after. Erika Chaffey shares eight inspiring builds and expert insight for project success

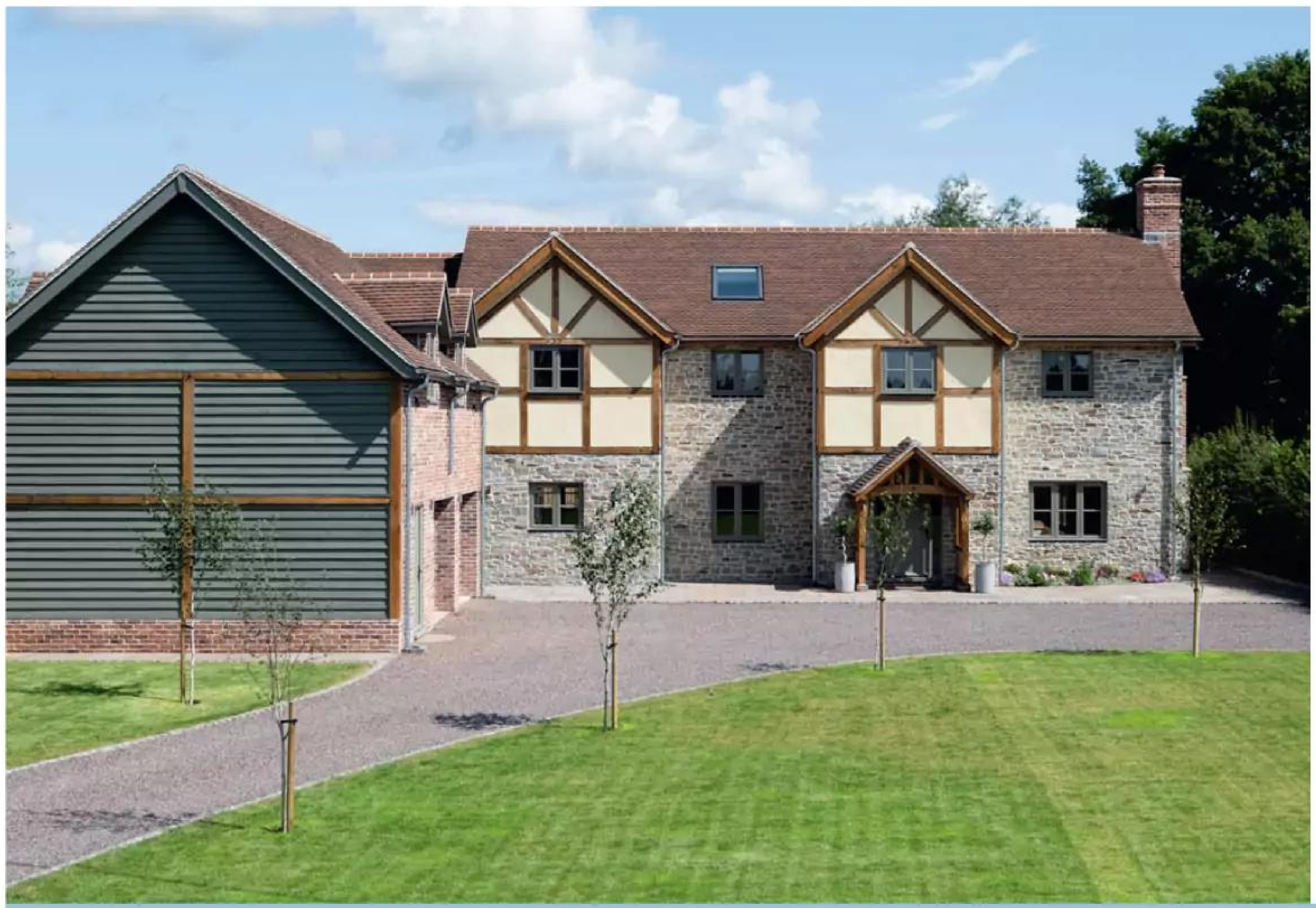
Cladding plays a crucial role in both the aesthetics and performance of your timber-built home. With a variety of characterful materials available in a range of shades, finishes and laying patterns, you're certain to find an exterior solution that balances these factors with your project budget, location and other considerations. Designing this element alongside your structural plans is key for ensuring you can achieve great results, potentially using a combination of quality materials.

When specifying your exterior finish, core considerations include durability, breathability, thermal performance, aesthetics and cost. Like most construction approaches, timber-built homes need a cladding system that allows moisture to escape, while protecting the structure from the elements. Maintenance requirements, installation complexity and sustainability credentials should also be factored into your final decision.

Ultimately, finding the most appropriate exterior material will enhance your home's character while providing long-term protection. Whether you prefer a rustic, natural look or a sleek, modern design, there's a cladding option to suit your needs.

1 FLINT & CORTEN STEEL

Traditional random stone walling has a naturally uneven profile, so it's usually laid against a backing block to maintain a stable cavity. This approach increases wall thickness and requires more wet-trade work, making full-house coverage less common. Instead, stone cladding is often used to highlight key elevations or feature sections of a timber home. This ultra low-energy property incorporates Timber Innovations' Passiv Innovations system with a striking mix of flint and steel cladding for a bold, modern finish. **(www.timberinnovations.co.uk)**



2 TUDOR BOARD CLADDING

From ultra-modern angular designs to charming heritage-style properties, your chosen exterior finish will help to complete the look you want for your ideal home and location. This heritage-inspired property by Frame Technologies features Tudor-style render and board cladding on the upper portion of two gable walls, set against an appealing random stone finish. This type of exterior boarding can be stained in a range of shades, combining the charming look of natural oak with modern durability. **(www.frametechnologies.co.uk)**

EXPERT VIEW CLADDING MATERIAL PROS & CONS

PHOTO: MARK WATTS

HELEN NEEDHAM, head of architecture at Oakwrights, shares her insights on the standout features and different price points for the most popular external finishes

Different cladding products each have their own advantages, and the right choice for your project will depend on the look you're after, your budget and long-term maintenance considerations. A mixture can be very effective – generally a maximum of two or three finishes looks right; more than this and it can start to appear too busy. Choosing the best materials for the local vernacular is important, too, particularly in terms of planning permission. Getting the proportions and detailing right is essential to ensure the design looks its best, is sufficiently durable and offers easy upkeep.

TIMBER CLADDING is a natural, honest, beautiful and sustainable material, and highly durable when used with the right detailing. Available in a wide range of profiles, it can be painted, stained or left untreated. Species such as oak or larch have high resistance to decay and can be left to silver naturally. It's relatively easy to install, fixed back to the frame using appropriate battens, stainless steel nails and breathable membranes. Some mortgage companies prefer to only see up to 50% of a house or garage clad in timber. Fire regs set criteria for distances to boundaries and protection during the construction process, which a design professional can advise on.
Price range: £ – ££ – £££ (depending on species and finish)

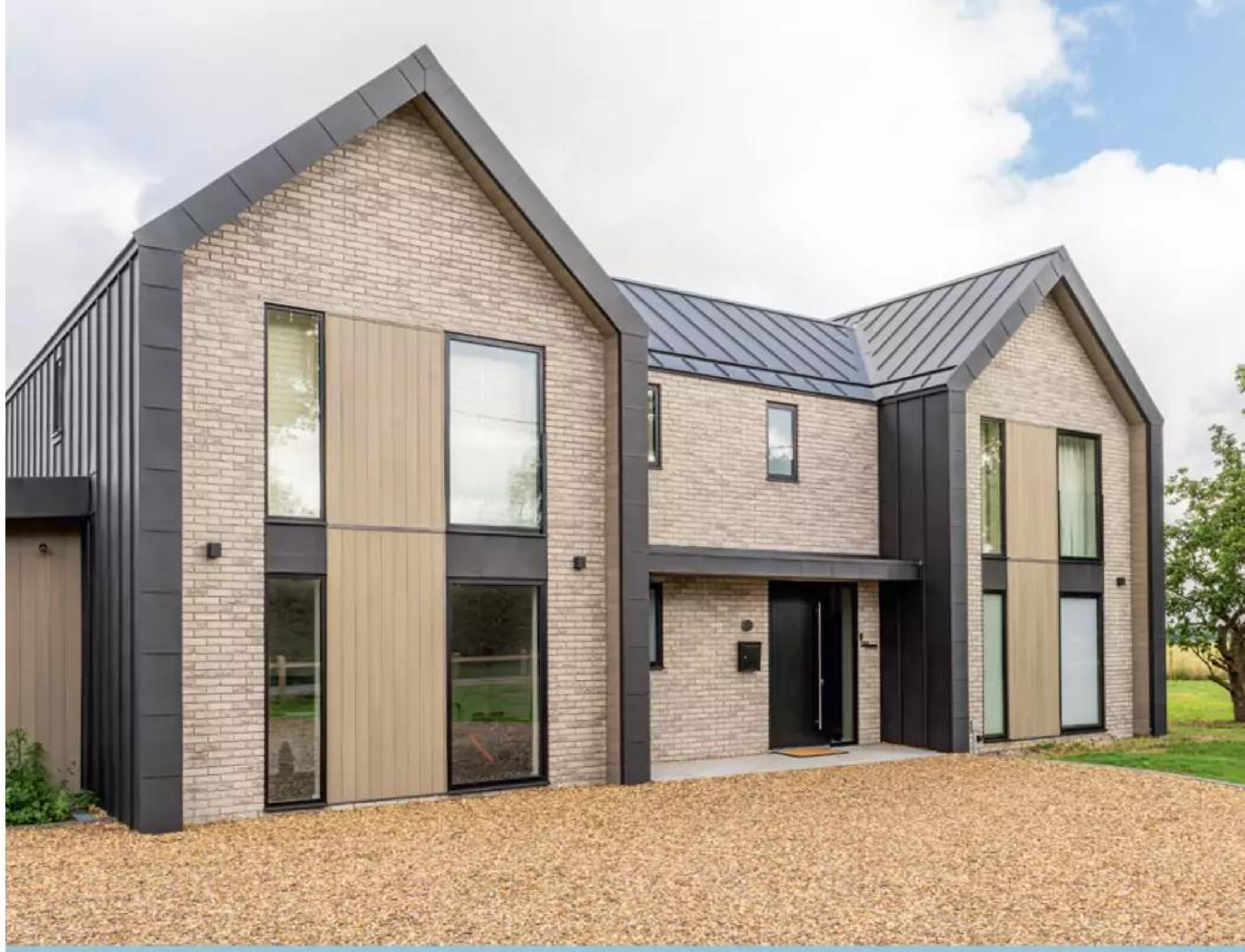
METAL CLADDING such as standing seam, aluminium or zinc, is a modern option for timber homes, offering a contemporary aesthetic in a range of colours and textures. Products are highly durable, weather-resistant, non-combustible and low-maintenance, requiring only occasional cleaning. Some, like zinc, develop a protective patina that enhances character and longevity. Careful detailing and professional installation are crucial due to thermal expansion and fixing requirements.
Price range: £ – ££ – £££ (depending on material and finish)

RENDER provides a smooth, modern finish over a timber frame, with a wide range of colours and textures – from smooth to roughcast. Correctly applied, it offers good weather resistance and can enhance insulation properties. Render may be prone to cracking over time but can be repaired and repainted when needed. Self-cleaning silicone versions reduce maintenance requirements. Design-wise, render can appear bright in a landscape, so it's important to consider its visual impact. For timber homes, it requires specialist installation over a compatible render board system.
Price range: £ – ££ – £££

COMPOSITE WEATHERBOARD is made of several different materials, such as fibre-cement or wood composite. It offers a balance of durability and aesthetics, available in wood-effect, smooth and textured finishes in a range of colours. These products are low-maintenance, particularly when pre-finished, and usually have good resistance to moisture, rot, pests and fire. Composite cladding is typically fixed to battens with specialist fasteners.
Price range: £ – ££ – £££

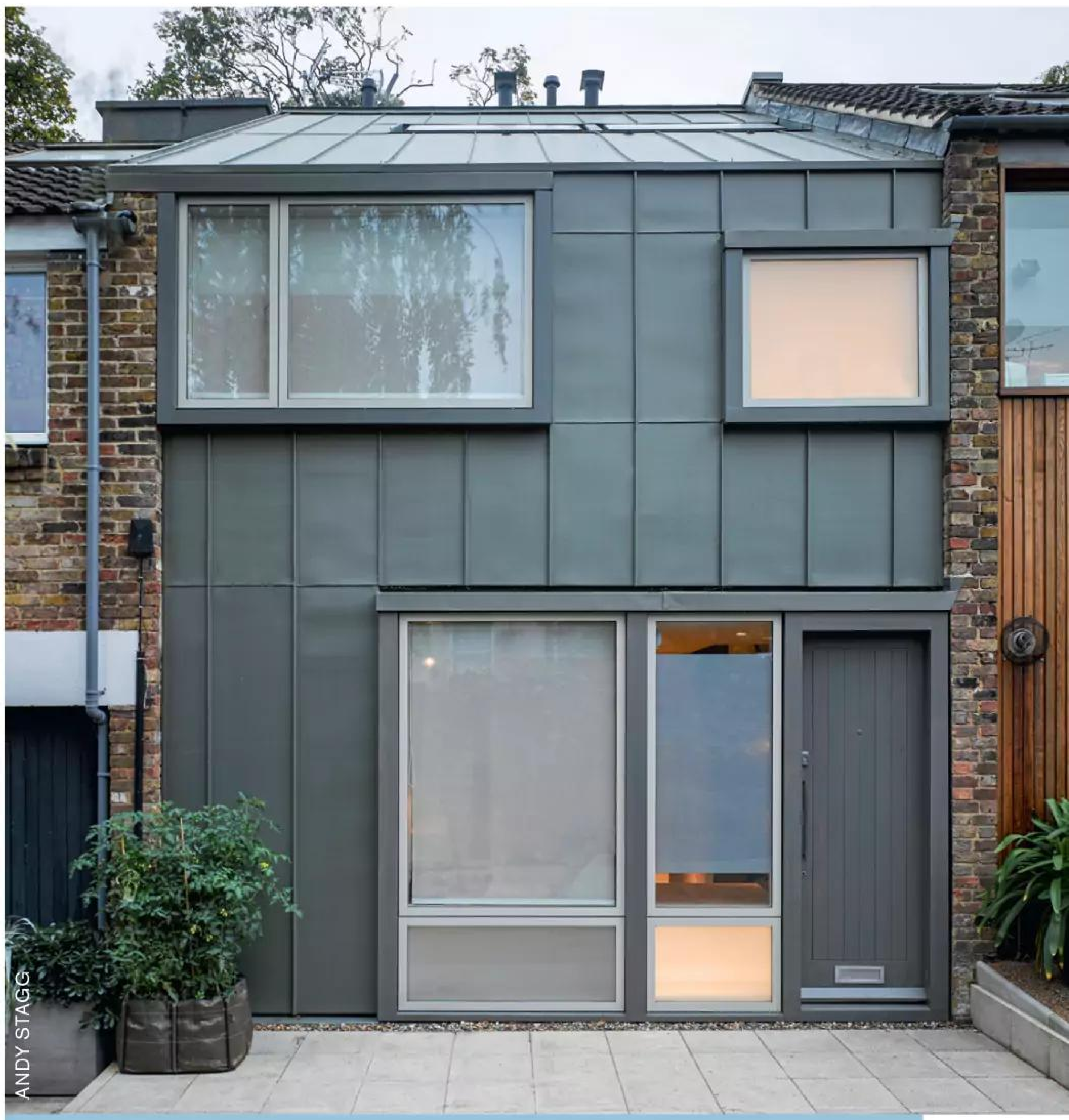
BRICK & BRICK SLIPS are available in a wide range of colours and textures to suit both heritage and modern styles. Installed with a ventilated cavity for moisture control, they offer excellent durability and weather resistance, with minimal maintenance other than repointing over time. Brick slips (tile-like versions) can be installed using adhesive panels, whereas full bricks require structural support. Typically, brick ties are added to external battens and bound into the masonry. Expect mid-range prices for slips, and high-end for full brick.
Price range: £ – ££ – £££

NATURAL STONE offers a natural, luxury aesthetic and can applied as thin stone veneers or full 150mm stone faces over a timber structure. With proper detailing, this finish is extremely durable and weather-resistant. Limestone, sandstone and slate are popular options, and the choice may come down to the local vernacular. You'll need a specialist installer or stonemason to ensure correct fixing. Like brick, the stone should be tied back, and repointing may be needed over time.
Price range: £ – ££ – £££



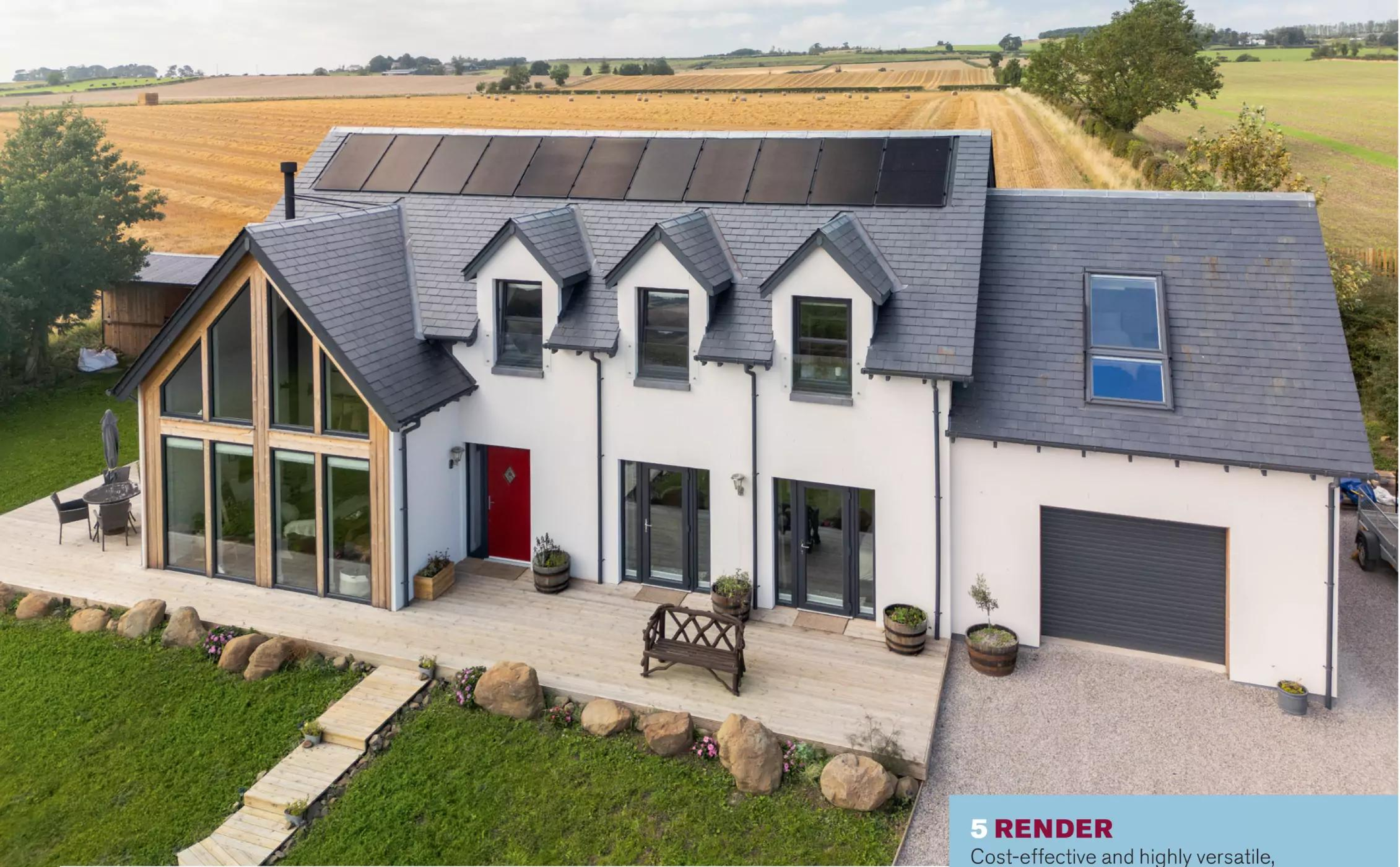
3 BRICK SLIPS

If a brick finish is best suited to your location and project goals, special wall ties are available to secure the cladding to the main timber superstructure while allowing for differential movement between the two materials. These are usually nailed into the frame and bedded into the mortar layer. Brick slips (thin tiles) are a lightweight alternative, ideal for creating intricate patterns on one elevation, finishing returns and similar details. Supplied and constructed by Daniels & Vincent, this timber frame home in Suffolk features a muted, neutral brick finish, plus zinc and composite cladding for a modern yet sympathetic and durable exterior facade. **(www.danielsandvincent.co.uk)**


ANDY STAGG

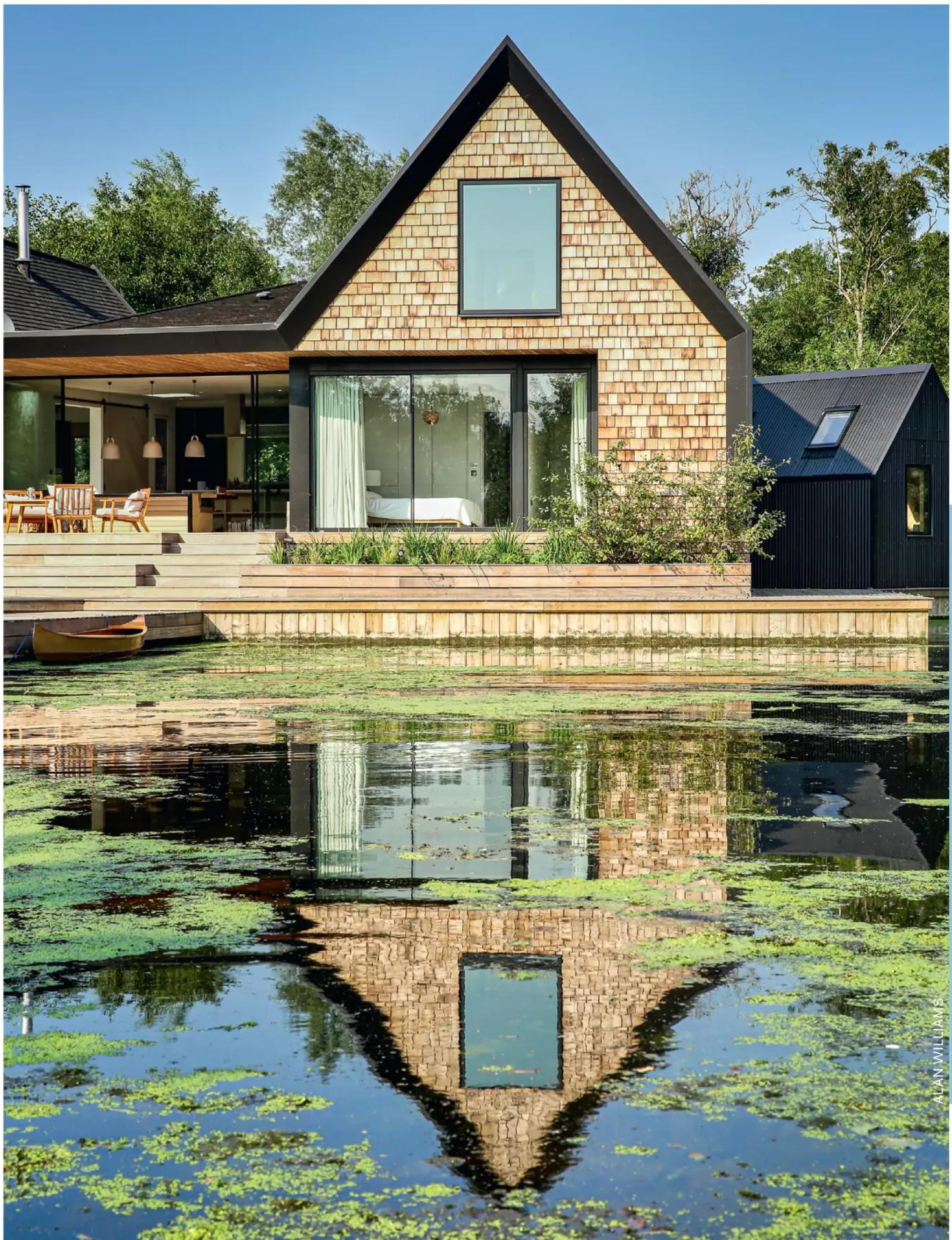
4 STANDING SEAM ZINC

Zinc is low-maintenance, highly durable, cost-effective and offers great design potential for a range of property styles. Plus, it's renewable and recyclable, contributing to the eco-credentials of your project. When chemically treated, zinc's natural shiny finish can be altered, developing a ready-made patina and creating a more weathered look. Situated amongst a row of Georgian terraces, this infill timber frame home in North London features standing seam zinc cladding that wraps around the whole exterior of the new building as part of an insulated system. **(www.paularcherdesign.co.uk)**



5 RENDER

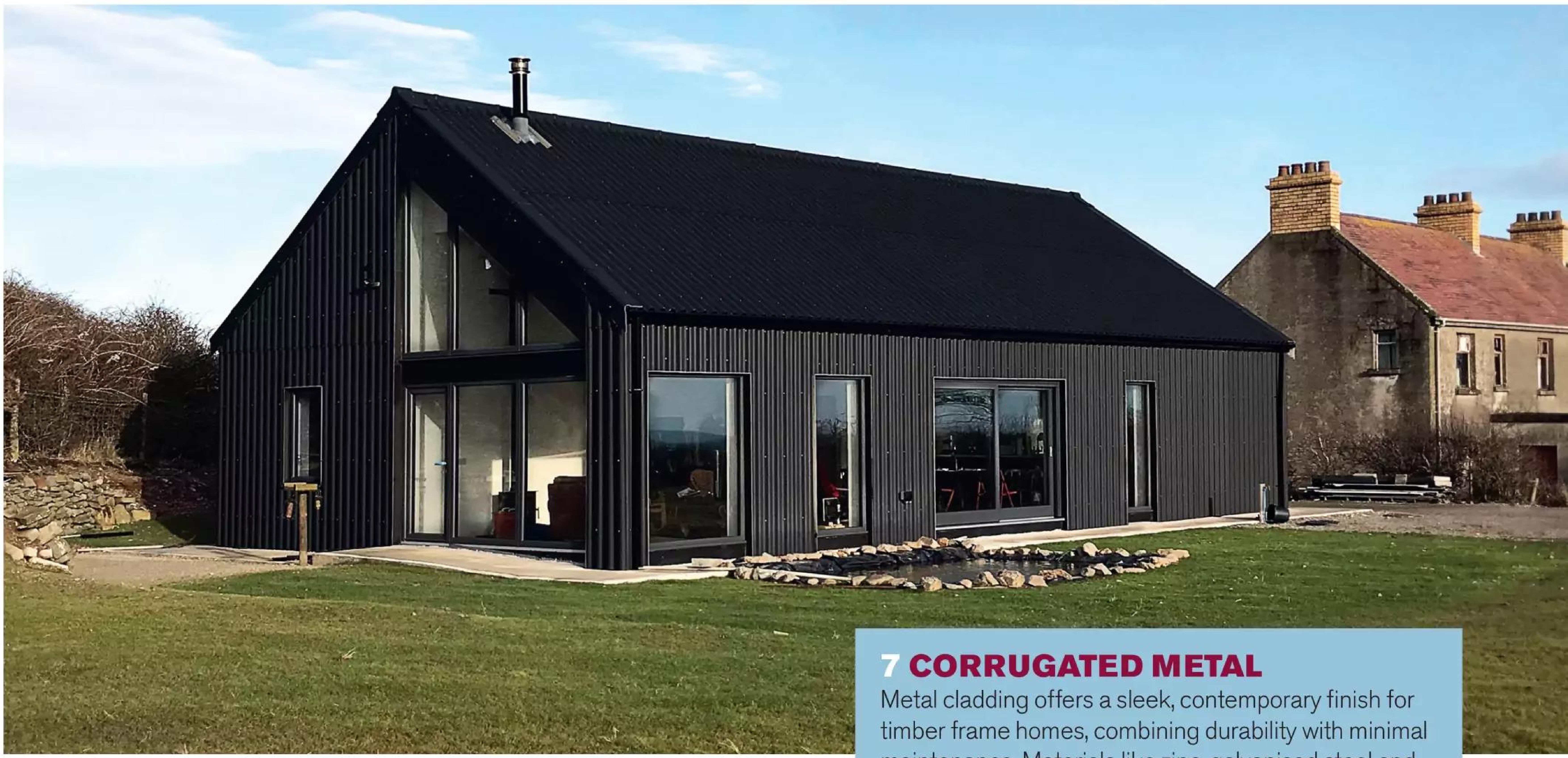
Cost-effective and highly versatile, render can be used as a full finish, to highlight certain features, or as an accent alongside other materials. Available in virtually any colour and a range of textural finishes, this solution can help to create sleek, ultra-modern homes, heritage-style properties and everything in between. Fleming Homes delivered the timber frame for this sustainable, energy-efficient house in Nenthorn, Roxburghshire. Designed to slot in beautifully with the countryside context, white render, timber accents and slate roofing were selected to create a timeless look. **(www.forminghomes.co.uk)**



ALAN WILLIAMS

6 TIMBER SHINGLES

Shingles are a modular exterior material made from split logs. Unlike traditional wooden cladding boards, they look more like tiles and can be used on your home's walls and roof. Timber shakes are a similar alternative with a more natural, rustic look. The hand-cut individual pieces are less uniform in size, shape and finish than sawn shingles. This home replaced an outdated bungalow on the Norfolk Broads. Platform 5 Architects opted for blackened timber shingles on the roof and side walls, while the same material was left untreated on the front and rear elevations, allowing the finish to weather naturally. **(www.platform5architects.com)**



7 CORRUGATED METAL

Metal cladding offers a sleek, contemporary finish for timber frame homes, combining durability with minimal maintenance. Materials like zinc, galvanised steel and aluminium provide excellent weather resistance while enabling creative designs. Ideal for feature sections or entire elevations, metal cladding pairs well with timber and other materials for a striking, modern aesthetic. Designed by 2020 Architects, this timber frame cottage is clad in budget-friendly, corrugated black metal panels. **(www.2020architects.co.uk)**

EXPERT Q&A DESIGNING YOUR CLADDING SETUP

ELLA THORNS, architect at Studio Bark shares her top tips for creating your ideal exterior facade

What should you prioritise when selecting cladding?

Your choice of exterior material should be guided by your home's setting and orientation, considering exposure to rain and sun, the availability of locally-sourced materials and any planning constraints – as well as personal preference. On a tight budget, it's wise to specify more durable materials for the most exposed elevations.

When it comes to timber cladding, choosing the right species is crucial – not just for durability and appearance but also for its impact on biodiversity. Much of the timber used in the UK is imported, but at Studio Bark we aim to work with locally-sourced products where possible. Opting for timber with Grown in Britain certification ensures it's sustainably sourced in line with the UK Forestry Standard and the government's Timber Procurement Policy.

What different factors will influence cladding design?

Local authorities often default to brick, simply because adjacent buildings use it. To make the case for an alternative exterior finish, we take a context-sensitive but playful approach – picking up on relevant architectural patterns and reinterpreting them in our cladding design. This helps us demonstrate a connection to the surrounding area while introducing low-carbon materials that support a more sustainable build.

Cladding design, both in terms of material selection and patterning, is something you should always discuss from the early stages of a project, ensuring it complements the overall design vision and meets practical requirements and aesthetic goals.

What solutions can add wow factor to a timber property?

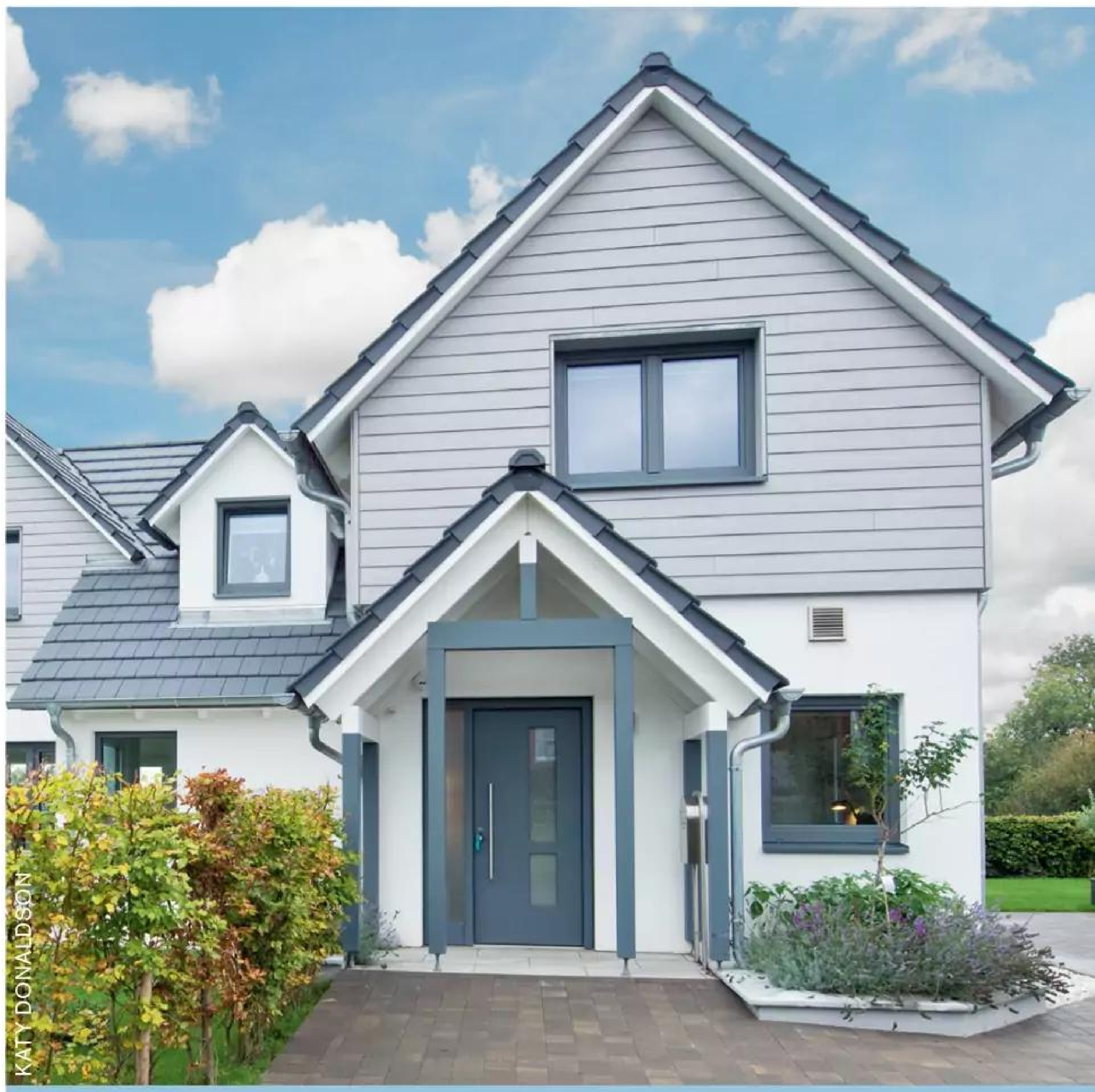
We often leave wood cladding to weather naturally, allowing it to develop a soft, silvery-grey patina that blends with the landscape. Over the past decade, black-stained or charred timber has surged in popularity. It's great for organic settings, where it acts as a quiet, recessive element in the landscape, allowing plants and greenery to pop.

More recently, we've experimented with a rainbow of cladding colours and stains, especially for urban projects that suit a bolder, more playful aesthetic. The possibilities are endless!

What other design elements should you take into account?

It's important to consider how the cladding interacts with the size, shape and details of your building. Vertical or horizontal boards work well on flat surfaces, while curved forms suit smaller elements like timber shingles. Windows and doors play a key role: aligning cladding boards with their edges creates a clean, intentional look, and varying board widths below windows can add subtle visual interest.

Practical detailing is essential for durability. Timber board ends are vulnerable to moisture, so capping them and incorporating overhangs can significantly extend their lifespan.



KATY DONALDSON

8 FIBRE-CEMENT

Made from a mix of wood cellulose, cement and sand to form a strong, water-resistant boarding, fibre-cement cladding comes in a variety of textures, baked-in colours and it can be easily painted in your chosen shade. For this turnkey home by Hanse Haus, a wood-effect fibre-cement weatherboarding was selected to complete the exterior in order to satisfy local planning requirements. **(www.hanse-haus.co.uk)**

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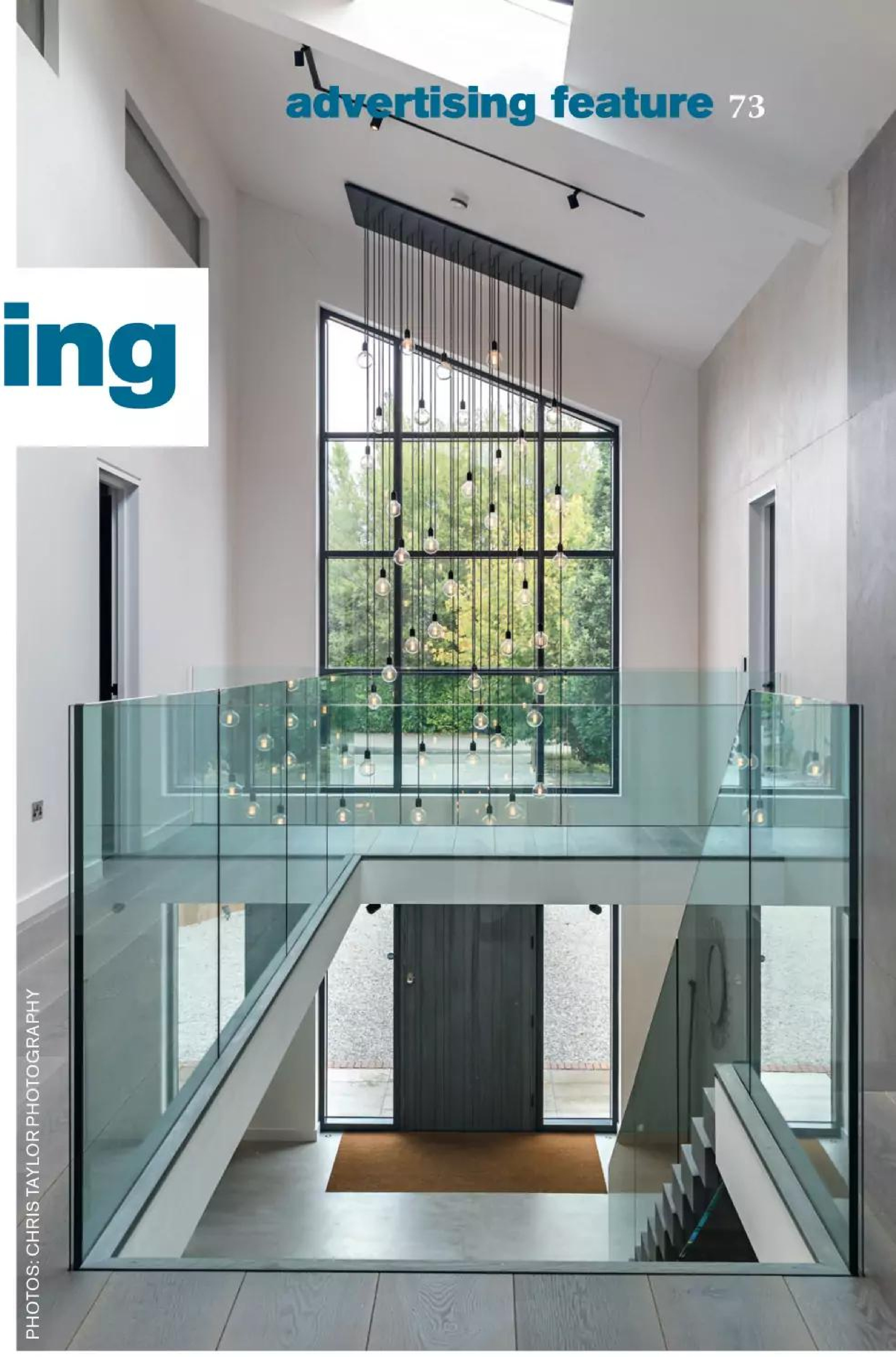
Adding **wow-factor** to your **home's glazing**

Want to create light-filled living spaces in your self build home? IDSystems' **Edward Stobart** shares his expert advice on using architectural glazing to elevate your project



PHOTOS: CHRIS TAYLOR PHOTOGRAPHY

Above: IDSystems' angled glass curtain walling helps create a stunning light-filled, double-height entrance hall on this barn conversion in Buckinghamshire

Many self builders dream of bright, beautiful homes that offer a wonderful connection with the outdoors. Bringing designs like this to life with architectural glazing requires expert advice and careful product selection. You'll want to mix-and-match configurations and sizes, while achieving your goals for sightlines, security and thermal performance.

What exactly is architectural glazing?

The answer is rather subjective, and definitions vary between architects and glazing suppliers. However, with residential properties it typically refers to using large amounts of glass to enhance a project's design, rather than being purely functional. So, it's less casement windows and more fully glazed gables, floor-to-ceiling picture windows and the like.

Left: This stylish self-build home in Essex features custom designed theEDGE2.0 sliding doors on both ground floor and first floor to maximise views over the river

When it comes to large apertures and big volumes of glass, the innate strength and performance of aluminium frames means these systems really come into their own. Suppliers like IDSystems can combine different types of architectural glazing system together to add real wow-factor to your finished home.

Where can it be used?

Architectural glazing is a great option wherever you want to maximise the impact of your home design, inside and out. On the front elevations of houses, it's frequently specified for double- or triple-height entrance halls. These incredible spaces deliver a bright, light-filled and welcoming environment when you first step into a house – plus they help to draw light further into the centre of the building.

On rear elevations, architectural glazing is often used to enhance the connection between house and garden. In rural or seaside locations, it can help make the most of stunning views over rolling fields or coastline. With clever specification, you can create features like fully-opening corners, up-and-over glazing that pairs views of countryside and sky, and more.

Popular features

Glass **curtain walling** has been a mainstay of commercial design, providing offices and public buildings with copious natural light. Over the past decade it has become a sought-after feature in modern residential architectural, too, enabling spectacular double or triple-height spaces.

Curtain walling can be purely a fixed-frame glazed screen; or it can be designed to incorporate opening elements such as window sashes, entrance and French doors; or even installed in tandem with sliding and bifold doors. It's most often used for new build homes, where openings can be designed and created specifically to maximise the size and appearance of the curtain walling.

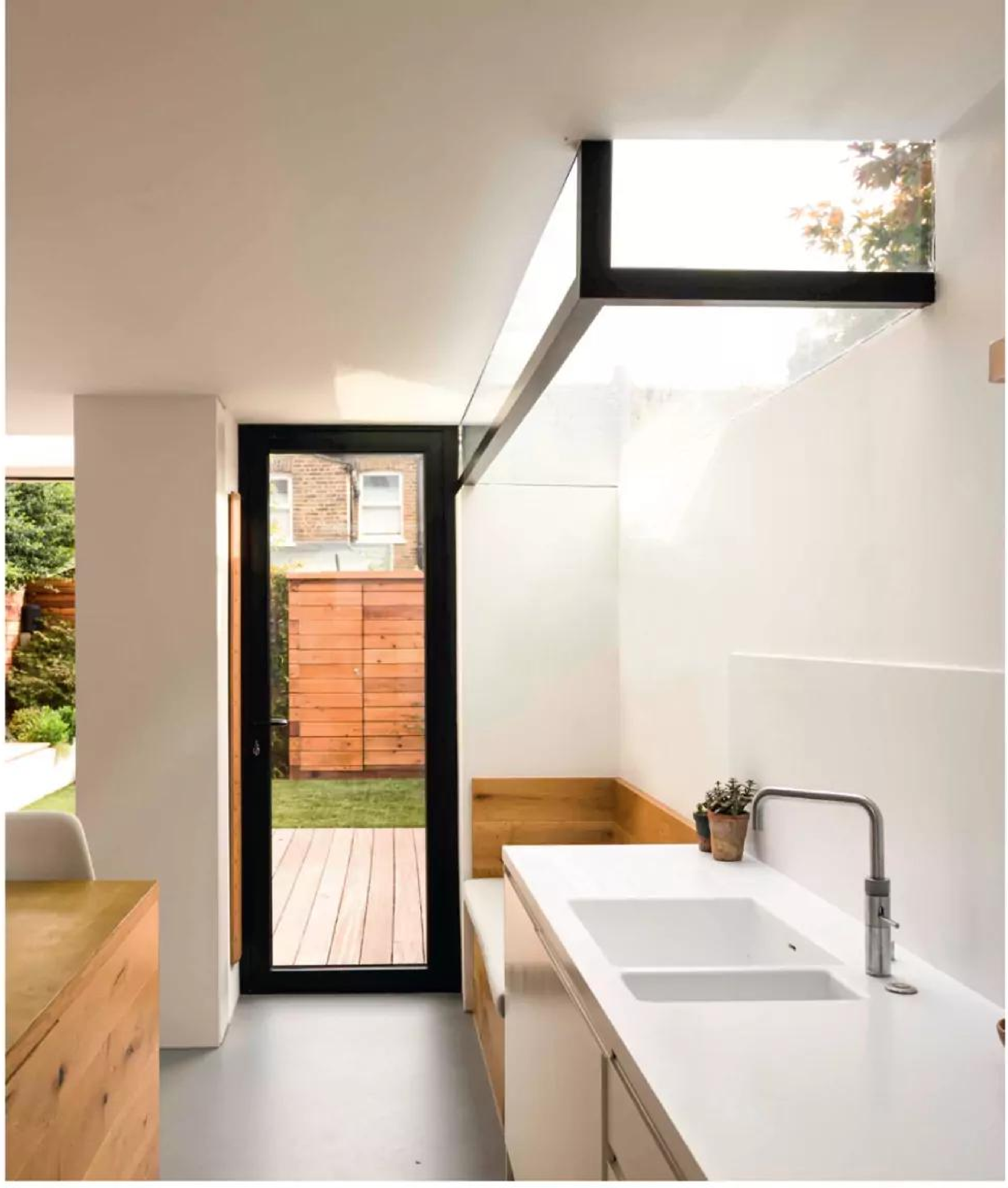
Large **glazed doors**, such as IDSystems' theEDGE2.0 ultra-slim sliding systems, are often referred to as architectural glazing. They offer a stunning visual effect with their practical application as a door. For extension and renovation projects, it's incredibly popular among architects and homeowners alike to plan in a run of sliding doors that spans across the entire rear elevation.

During winter, when the doors are closed, sliding door systems perfectly frame the views out. Products like theEDGE2.0 offer panels up to 3m wide and incredibly narrow 20mm aluminium frames. During summer, sliders are prized for their ability to open up a large aperture and extend your living space out on to the patio. And on a first floor, they can be teamed with balconies and glazed balustrades to take that indoor-outdoor connection even further.

EDWARD STOBART is technical sales manager at IDSystems, which is a multiple Build It award-winning glazing specialist. The company has over 25 years' experience delivering wow-factor glazing for self builds, home extensions and renovations. Edward works closely with self builders to offer advice and support on all aspects of glazing. For more information visit **www.idsystems.co.uk** or speak with one of IDSystems' technical sales team on **01603 408804**.

Rooflights & lanterns for extensions

Overhead glazing is fantastic for creating an impressive design feature and flooding your new addition with natural light. Get your ideal specification with Erika Chaffey's guide



Right: Designed by William Tozer Associates, this sleek box rooflight neatly highlights a discreet seating zone in the open-plan extension, while bringing natural brightness into the task zone around the sink

Incorporating a rooflight or lantern into an extension project is one of the most effective ways to enhance natural light and create a bright, open and inviting addition. These glazed features not only improve access to daylight but also contribute to the aesthetic appeal of your home; ideal for blending functionality with architectural interest.

Whether your aim is to make a small space feel larger, bring light deeper into your floorplan, or create a striking focal point, overhead glazing offers a range of benefits. Indeed, with good, detailed design and proper installation, the right rooflight will elevate your home. Here's what you need to know to make the most out of this feature.

The benefits

A common post-extension complaint is that the existing house is now darker. "When extending, windows and doors will inevitably be further away from the original interior zones – what architects call a deep-plan problem," says William Tozer, director at William Tozer Associates. Rooflights and lanterns address this issue, bringing sunlight in from above and deeper into the layout. This reduces reliance on artificial lighting and creates a more enjoyable living environment.

When planning overhead glazing, location is king. "The junction between existing house and extension is usually the optimal position for rooflights in terms of bringing light into the interior," says William. "It also creates a useful visual break between the original property and the new addition."

Below: This timeless extension design features a timber roof lantern from Just Roof Lanterns, filling the entire room with daylight and providing an impressive feature

These features are also ideal for zoning a space and highlighting key areas within it, such as a dining table or island unit. "An extension often creates a single, open-plan room," says William. "Rooflights can be provide a sense of separation between kitchen, living and dining areas."

Beyond the functional benefits, rooflights and lanterns can help to make a room feel more open and airy, which is particularly valuable in projects where space might be limited. "They visually enlarge rooms by connecting indoor spaces seamlessly with the sky, improving overall aesthetics while boosting the house's value," says Annabel Fenwick, director at Just Roof Lanterns. Even a small unit can create the illusion of a larger area by drawing the eye upwards.

Design options

One of the first decisions to make is whether to opt for a fixed or opening unit. Fixed roof glazing can maximise the viewing area and deliver robust performance, with best-in-class thermal efficiency. They should also be lower-maintenance, as there's no mechanisms to go wrong. But openable rooflights offer purge ventilation – very handy for dispersing excess heat or cooking smells in kitchen-diners. They can also be automated for added convenience.

Traditionally, lanterns are fixed units, but modern solutions can include openable sections to allow some air flow. Keep in mind that any opening rooflights must comply with fire escape regulations if they are positioned in habitable rooms.

Your choice of frame material is also an important consideration. Common options include timber, aluminium and PVCu, each offering distinct benefits. Timber products provide a classic, natural look that works well in traditional homes but require periodic maintenance, unless the frame is externally clad. Aluminium frames offer a sleek aesthetic and are highly durable, with minimal upkeep, while PVCu solutions are a cost-effective and low-maintenance option. Consider if you want your overhead glazing to discreetly blend in with your roof and interiors with minimal framing, or create a standout, elevated feature.

Think about the glass type, too. "Prioritise products with high impact resistance as standard, to ensure added home security," says Sarah Hastings, head of marketing at Fakro. Triple glazing enhances heat retention, while laminated or toughened options improve security and safety.

The size and shape of the rooflight or lantern should be proportionate to the scope of your extension, ensuring it provides adequate light without overwhelming the space. "Explore options for unconventional sizes or colours to match your design preferences and the nature of your addition," adds Sarah. While budget will be a key driver, custom shapes and sizes can add a unique architectural feature. Bespoke overhead glazing could seamlessly fill a whole length of the new roof, or you might insert a run of three or four standard rooflights to achieve a similar effect. Up-and-over designs (where vertical windows return into roof glazing) are a great solution for maximising light flow, framing views and creating a dramatic focal point.

Roof structure

The design of your extension's roof will impact on glazing choice. "Products like domed or flat rooflights are ideal for pitches between 0-15°, offering versatility in the design, such as walk-on windows or ventilation" says Sarah.

Standard rooflights are designed for steeper pitches, ensuring proper water runoff and integration. "Centre pivot, top hung, or even more unique solutions like balcony-style rooflights are all great options for this type of structure," says Sarah. Pitched windows can be installed flush to the roofline or slightly raised, depending on the desired aesthetic and practical requirements, such as rainfall levels.

Lanterns are highly effective for flat roofs, adding height and visual interest, while allowing light to flood the space below. "Roof lanterns can also enhance sloped structures," says Annabel. "However, installation may require careful integration with the roof's precise pitch."

Regardless of your roof type, it's crucial to ensure the new structure can support the weight of your chosen unit. Large glass panels may require additional reinforcement in the roof, which will require a structural engineer's input. "Early discussions with reputable suppliers allow you to integrate specific dimensions, structural requirements and bespoke features into your plans, ensuring smooth installation and avoiding costly design revisions later," says Annabel.

Maintenance

Accessibility for cleaning and general upkeep should be considered from the outset. For hard-to-reach installations, it's worth opting for self-cleaning glass. This has a special coating that breaks down dirt when exposed to sunlight, allowing rainwater to wash it away – though it's important to note that self-cleaning glass isn't totally maintenance-free. Rooflights positioned at higher elevations may require additional equipment or professional cleaning to ensure proper upkeep and the longevity of your product.

Regular maintenance of flashings, seals and frames is also essential to prevent leaks and maintain insulation. Opening mechanisms should be checked regularly to ensure they function smoothly, particularly if automated.

Privacy & overheating

While natural light is a valuable asset in any home design, excessive solar gains can lead to overheating, particularly in spaces that receive a lot of direct sunshine. Managing this effectively is crucial to ensuring year-round comfort. Solar control glazing can help. This features advanced coatings on the glass to reduce heat transmission, while still allowing plenty of daylight to filter into the space.

QUICK LOOK BUDGETING FOR OVERHEAD GLAZING

Frame material, opening configuration, motorisation, glass type and coatings will all affect the overall cost for your ideal rooflight or lantern. Depending on these key drivers, units can cost anywhere from a few hundred pounds to easily running into the £1,000s for large, bespoke, high-spec solutions; or for rooflights that provide roof access.

For example, a 550mm x 780mm centre pivot pitched rooflight from Keylite, in clear lacquered pine with hi-therm glazing and manual opening, starts from £406.80 (including VAT but excluding installation). For the largest size available in this same style, 1,340mm x 1,400mm, the base price increases to £817.20.

Taking that 550 x 780mm unit with all of the same features, upgrading to triple-glazing puts the price at £670.80; while opting for electric opening rather than manual will cost £914.40. Adding an electric integral blind to the spec brings the price up to £1,220.40.

For a standard rooflight, installation should cost a few hundred pounds on top of the unit price. Expect that figure to rise significantly for large or complex installs, especially those that need lifting equipment and more experienced labour to ensure a quality result.

The orientation of your roof windows is another key factor – although you may not have full control over this aspect when extending . "Sometimes, the necessity for light or views in a particular location will determine the position of a rooflight, but this will be at odds with other considerations like heat gain or privacy," says William. "Sand-blasting glass can block views to or from neighbours, while still allowing light where it's needed, and integrated blinds can be concealed if the issues are intermittent."

Above: Modular windows, featuring multiple units, can be a boon for the right project. This 2-in-1 rooflight by Velux has one fixed and one openable pane, providing ventilation and ample natural light

Additional measures, such as canopies, louvres and blinds can be used to regulate the amount of sunlight entering your extension. Automated internal blinds and automated smart glass options that tint in response to heat levels are also available for those looking to use smart tech to enhance convenience.

CONTACTS **Fakro** 01283 554755 www.fakro.co.uk **Just Roof Lanterns** 01892 525390 www.justrooflanterns.co.uk **Keylite** 01283 200158 www.keyliteroofwindows.com **Velux** 01592 778225 www.velux.co.uk **William Tozer Associates** 020 7404 0675 www.williamtozerassociates.com

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NEED TO KNOW

ECO UPGRADES FOR LISTED HOUSES

Period property expert, Alan Tierney, takes a look at how you can improve a protected house's energy efficiency

BEN PIPE

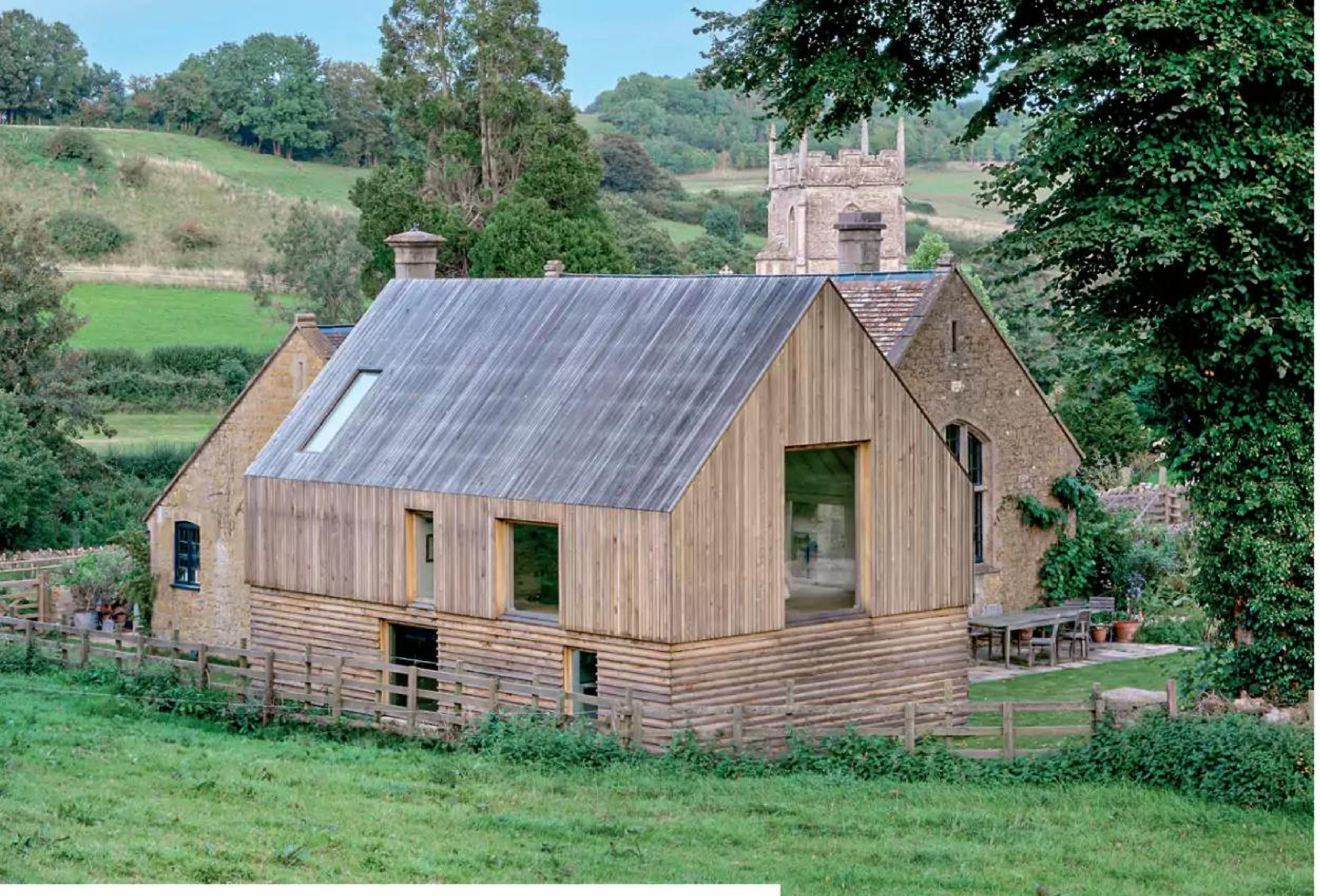
When renovating a listed building, there are three overriding priorities: you must obtain listed building consent (LBC) and strictly comply with its conditions throughout the project; materials and techniques must be compatible with the fabric and physical performance characteristics of the building and materials, building operations, installed elements and equipment must be sustainable and optimise low-energy performance. Fortunately, there is a great deal of overlap between these criteria. The materials most compatible with traditional structures are inherently sustainable and more likely to gain LBC. So, building work that enhances the condition and physical performance of the house's structural envelope will naturally tend to improve its thermal performance.

Listed building consent

Before carrying out any alterations that affect the building's structure, you will require listed building consent, in addition to any planning permission you may need. Undertaking works without LBC is a serious offence, which can lead to expensive fines and the cost of reinstatement.

There is a requirement to show that the work you carry out will tend to preserve or enhance the significance of the

Set on a serene and historic site near Farleigh Hungerford Castle in Bath, this charming, 15th-century listed cottage has been enhanced with a minimalist glass extension by Greenaway Architecture (www.greenawayarchitecture.co.uk). Complete with minimal frames and a simplistic, cubic design, the glass-to-glass addition comprises an eco-friendly sedum roof and three panes of efficient double glazing which house a spacious living area



FRANCESCA LOWENE

Built in 1864, this listed, local village school was converted into a house in the 1940s and subsequently extended in the 1970s. Bindloss Dawes (www.bindlossdawes.com) was commissioned to reimagine the conversion with a two-storey, timber-clad addition that sensitively reinterprets the old school's form and character while adding a contemporary touch. The exterior embraces a mix of vertical and horizontal chestnut cladding, which will slowly mellow into a light, silvery grey, complementing the main house's weathered local stone

listed building. Doing this will call for a lot of research to properly understand the building's physical performance, character, historical development and any particular features or associations that contribute to its listed status.

Materials, techniques and design of any alterations must be compatible with the existing fabric. Any additions or extensions must be subservient to and not detract from the original. This doesn't mean they can't be contrasting; in fact, ultra-modern additions are usually considered more appropriate, but there will be a high quality threshold. Even quite major interventions can be justified if you can show that they will significantly enhance the building.

Moisture movement

It's important to understand how older buildings deal with moisture. Unlike modern houses, they were constructed from permeable materials, with no moisture barriers. As a result, they naturally absorb excess water from rain, the ground and vapour generated inside. The permeability of the fabric means that all this moisture can evaporate when conditions are favourable, creating an equilibrium that results in a dry, healthy building. To maintain this optimal performance, any materials introduced during a renovation project must be permeable to water, both as liquid and vapour. Rather confusingly, this process is generally referred to as breathability.

A dry building is a warm building

Traditional, listed buildings tend to have thick walls with high thermal mass. They therefore have the potential to be surprisingly thermally efficient, so long as they're able to dry out – wet walls are very good heat conductors. For this reason, the use of permeable materials is critical to the sustainability of a renovation project, as well as the health of the building's structural fabric and its occupants.

The next essential element to ensuring a dry building, is the rainwater goods (gutters and downpipes). It is safe to assume that an old house has defective rainwater goods – in 20 years of consulting, I've never seen a house where they're working properly! Other factors that can cause damp walls include poor details that concentrate rainwater runoff, raised ground levels and leaks from plumbing.

Undoing past mistakes

The importance of breathability was not well understood for much of the 20th century, and a worryingly high proportion of the construction industry still don't really get it. As a result, inappropriate, impermeable materials were used very widely in traditional buildings. This can have serious consequences for the building fabric (preventing water from evaporating) and therefore a negative impact on thermal performance. Most sustainable renovations will start with the removal of inappropriate materials such as cement render and pointing, plaster, plastic masonry paints and concrete floors.

Improving airtightness

Once a building is dry, the most effective measures you can take to boost thermal performance are to improve airtightness. Old, listed buildings tend to be leaky, mostly as a result of wear and tear. Draughts have a negative impact on internal temperatures but a much greater influence on comfort levels for occupants – humans are very sensitive to air movement; if you feel cold, you will feel the need to heat the house to a higher temperature. Those few extra degrees on the thermostat can defeat your eco efforts.

Air leakage tends to occur around ill-fitting doors and windows and where there are gaps in the building fabric, particularly at junctions. Finding them is fairly simple: you can sense most draughts with the back of your hand. The key thing is to carry out a thorough examination of the whole house and deal with every issue you find – to the level of detail of keyholes and letter flaps. Chimneys are a particular issue, leaking large amounts of hot air. Any unused chimneys should be sealed, but a small amount of ventilation must be maintained to minimise dampness.

Some background ventilation is essential for a healthy living environment, and it is almost impossible to be so effective with your draughtproofing efforts that this is eliminated. Generally, even if you do all you possibly can, the result will still be slightly more leaky than optimal. You should not need trickle vents in new windows (and listed buildings are exempt from the regs that demand these).

Insulation

Roofs and floors are the main priorities here and, as with everything else, the use of breathable materials is essential. A standard cold roof structure is easy to heatproof with rolls of insulation, just be sure to maintain a space for

WHICH MATERIALS SHOULD YOU AVOID?

DO NOT USE

- ✘ **Cement** Anywhere for anything
- ✘ **Gypsum plaster**
- ✘ **Plastic or resin based paints** Beware claims of breathability or vapour permeability; these are very loosely defined terms
- ✘ **Closed cell insulation**, such as eg PIR or polystyrene
- ✘ **Spray foam**
- ✘ **Plastic or bitumen moisture barriers**
- ✘ **Injected damp proof course (DPC)** If your mortgage lender asks for one, engage a well-qualified specialist to dispute
- ✘ **PVCu windows or gutters**

DO USE

- ✔ **Lime mortar, render, plaster**, ideally hot-mixed
- ✔ **Clay plaster** Its moisture buffering capacity is even better than lime products
- ✔ **Vapour open insulation boards** Wood fibre or cork are most widely available
- ✔ **Natural fibre insulation** batts or rolls made using wood fibre, hemp, sisal, sheepswool, recycled denim
- ✔ **Foamed glass insulation** provides both insulation and moisture barrier in solid floors
- ✔ **Loose-fill cellulose insulation** to fills enclosed voids, eg floors
- ✔ **Woodwool board** instead of plasterboard as it's breathable, insulating and fairly soundproof
- ✔ **Breathable interior paints**, such as clay paint, lime paint, limewash, silicate mineral paint
- ✔ **Aluminium gutters** They're very long lasting and lightweight

This wall has been finished with a lime plaster base coat – a more eco-friendly and appropriate choice than gypsum for heritage homes

ventilation at the eaves. Warm roofs (which are occupied) are more complicated and require expert specification. Suspended timber floors suffer heat loss and draughts – both can be fixed by carefully lifting the boards, draping an airtightness membrane to create pockets in between the joists, and filling those spaces with insulation.

It is sometimes possible to insulate over solid concrete floors, if there is plenty of headroom and the floor is not causing any damp problems in the base of the walls. More often, though, the floor must be removed and a new version installed with permeable insulation below, which is a major undertaking. There are very effective buildups available from specialist suppliers that use foamed glass insulation and have system approval from building control.

Embodied energy

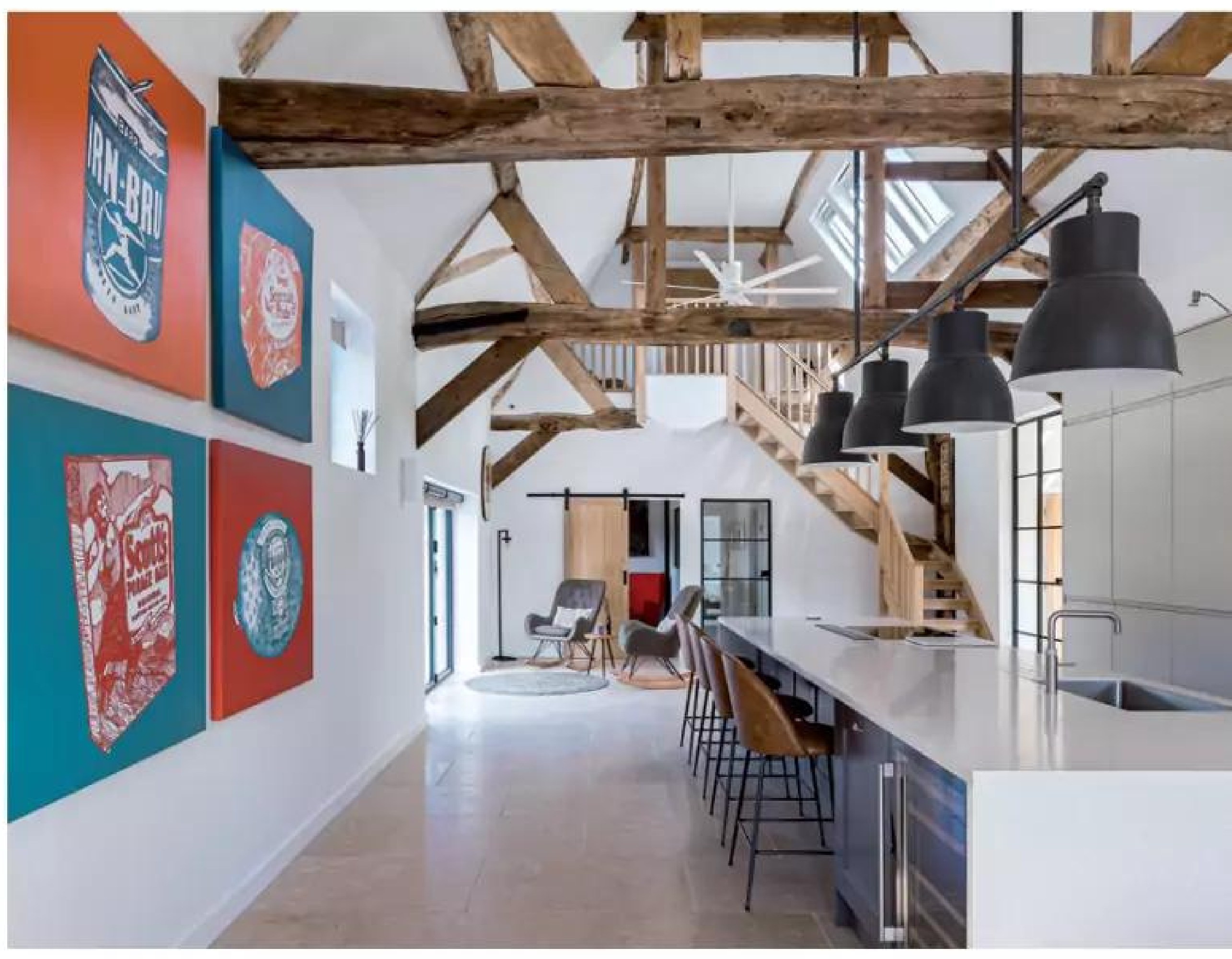
A very large proportion of the energy use and emissions involved in construction and renovation lies in the materials supply chain. Extraction, processing, manufacturing, packaging, transport and waste will each have a major impact on the sustainability of your project. Many modern materials are highly energy intensive, resource hungry, polluting and transported vast distances. On the flip side, the materials used to build a traditional house were typically sourced very locally, minimally processed, naturally derived and easily reused. The closer your supply chain can get to that, the more sustainable your renovation will be and the more compatible the materials will be with the original.

Operational energy

The final element in the sustainability equation is the energy efficiency of all the equipment you install to live in it. This is often the headline consideration, but unless the building's thermal properties are up to standard, the benefits are greatly reduced despite significant expense.

Once your house is inherently dry and warm, an eco-friendly, sustainable heat source such as a heat pump will be effective. Other considerations should be energy efficient lighting and appliances, low flow plumbing and sanitary fittings, and rainwater/greywater harvesting.

PETER LANDERS



Mailen Design (www.mailendesign.com) restored this listed agricultural barn in the heart of a small Oxfordshire village. All of the barn's external masonry needed to be repaired and reconstructed with care, using traditional methods. Sections of brickwork were taken apart by hand, meticulously categorised and replaced in the same positions to maintain the original patterns, whilst upgrading the mortar with natural lime pointing

ALAN TIERNEY

Alan Tierney is a period property consultant and conservation specialist. He runs Picketts Historic Building Conservation (www.pickettsconservation.co.uk), which offers hands-on advice to owners of heritage homes.

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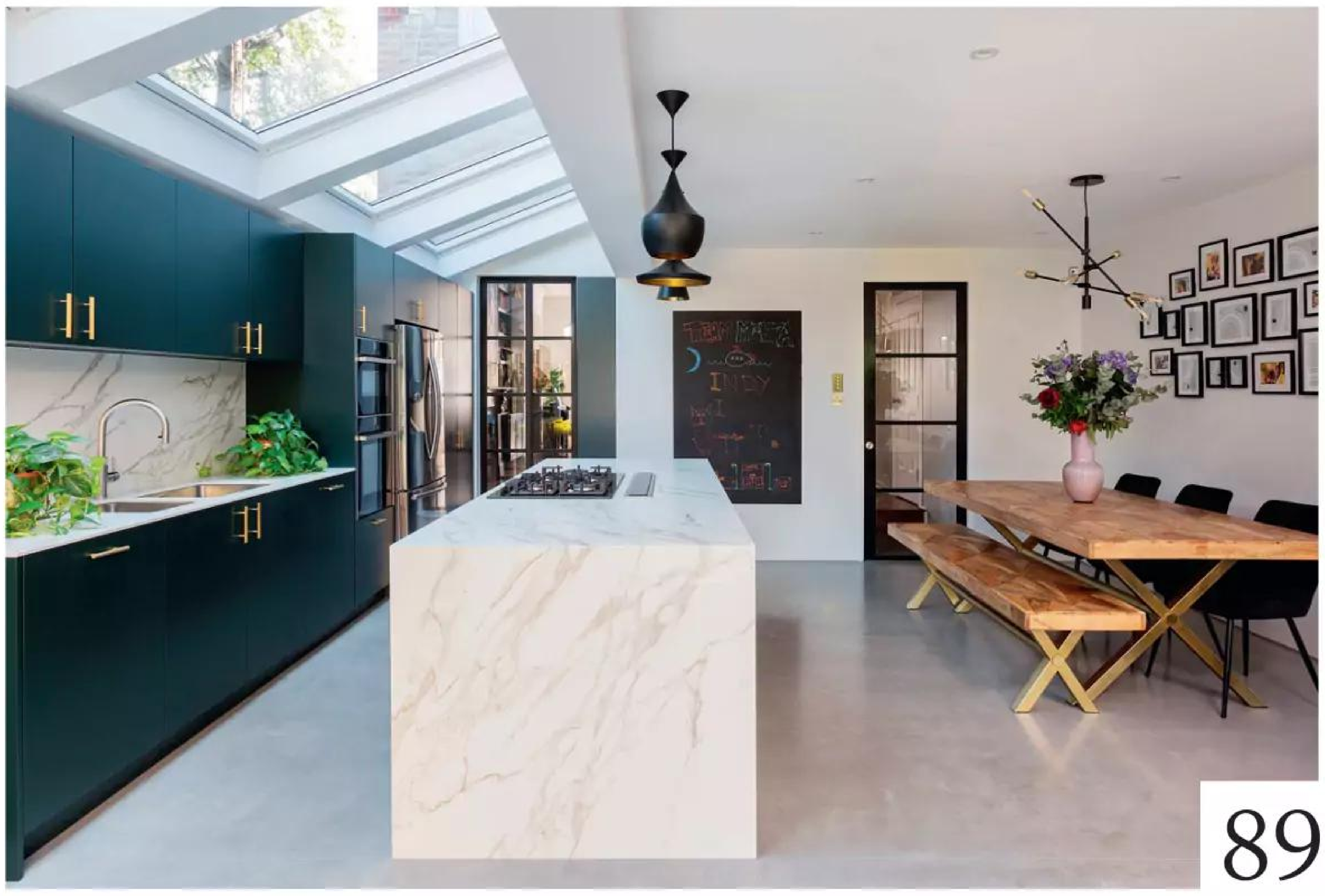

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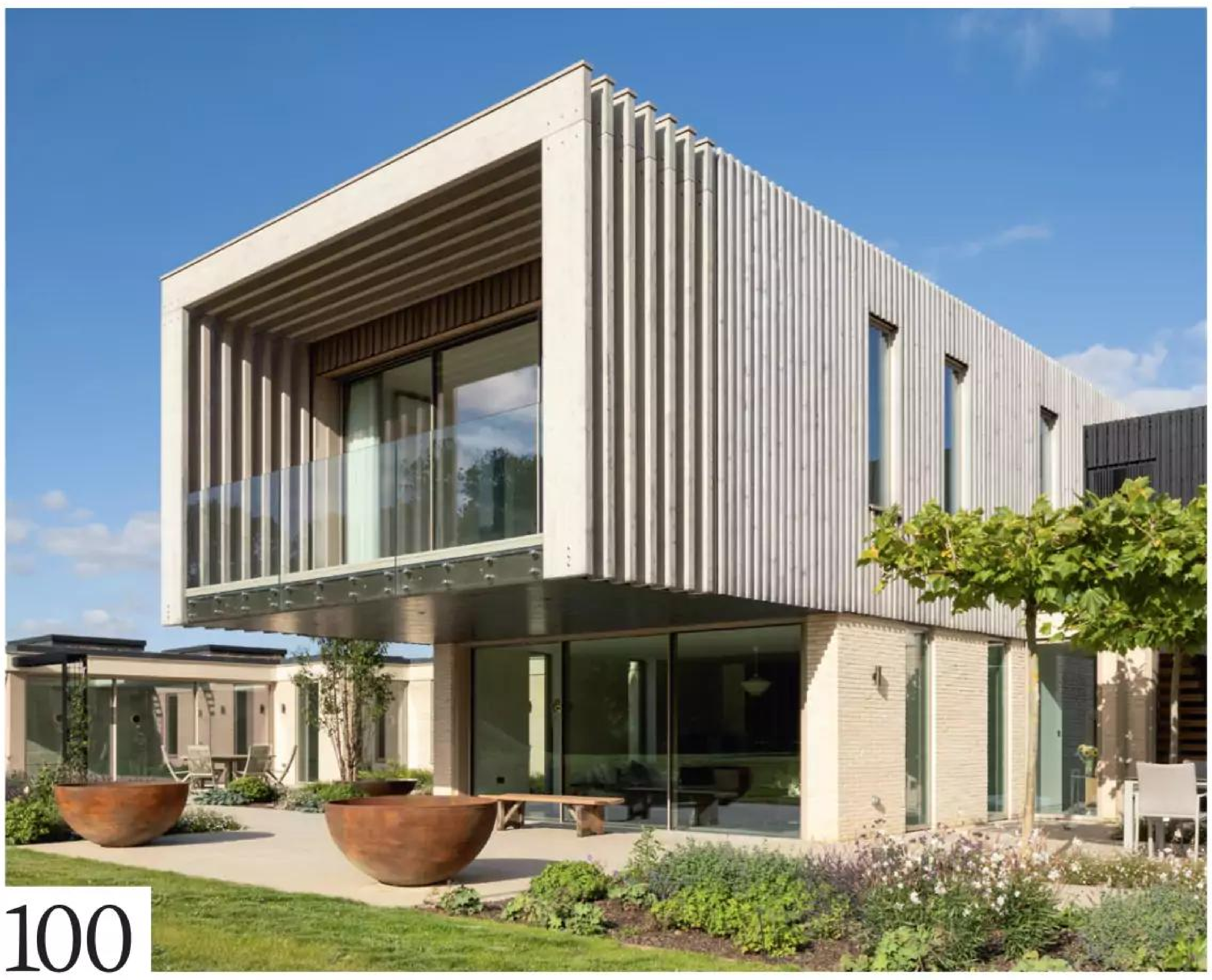

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EXPERT GUIDE

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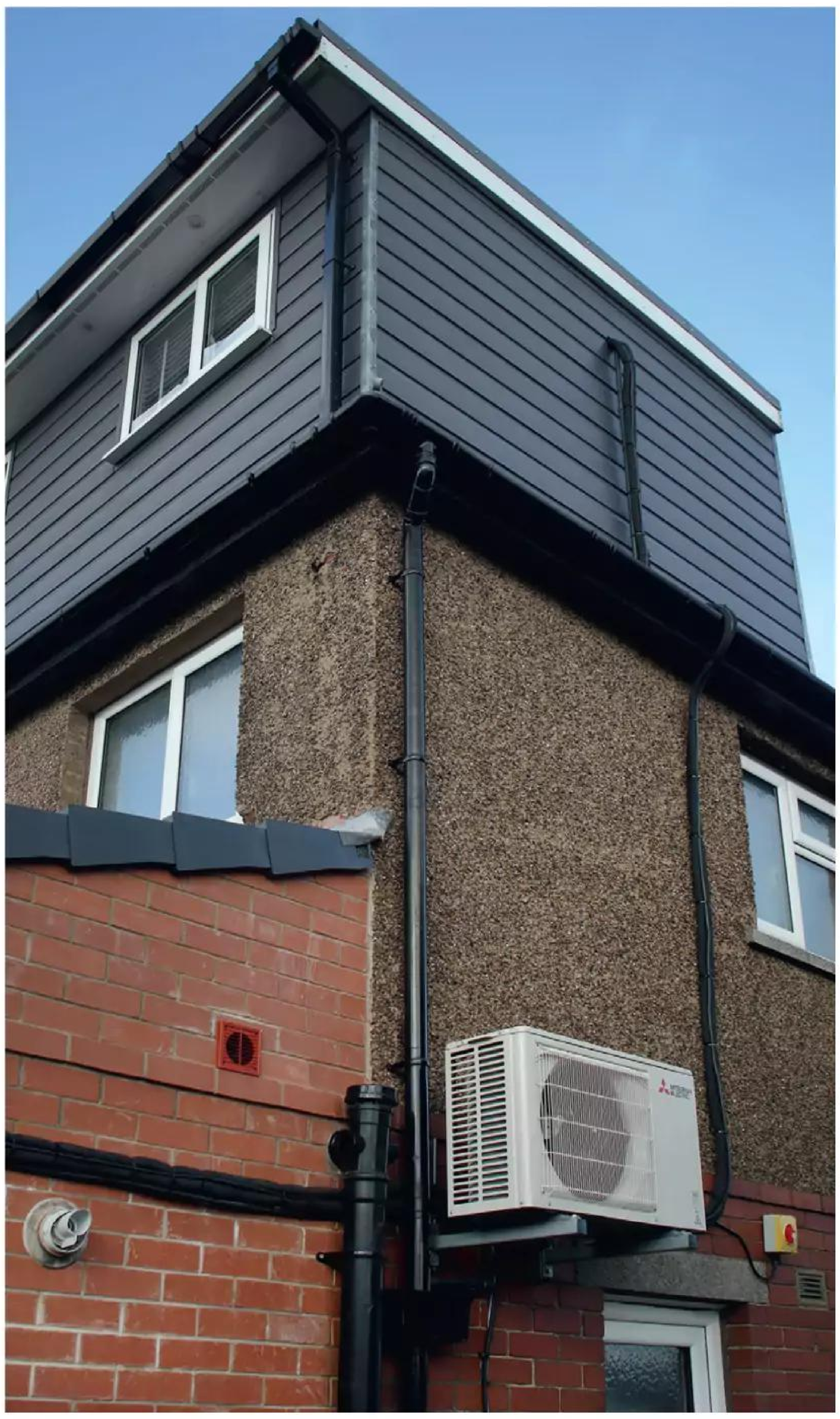
Air-to-air heat pumps

Heat pumps get a lot of publicity, but usually for those types that output to a water-based central heating system. Build It Live's eco heating expert David Hilton looks at whether air conditioning versions are worth considering for your project



Right: The owners of this house in Huddersfield added a kitchen-diner extension and new loft room. They weren't keen to hog wall space with radiators, so fitted air con to provide heating and cooling. They chose Mitsubishi Electric's (www.mitsubishielectric.com) M Series MXZ multi-split outdoor unit, linked to two stylish wall-mounted Zen internal units. The system was fitted in a just one day

Heat pumps have rapidly become the go-to technology for anyone looking to upgrade their central heating system, or indeed simply replace an old boiler. There are many different types available, and sometimes the choices can seem very overwhelming. One option that's less well known in the UK is air-to-air heat pumps – but what are they, and when could they be the right fit?

Heat pump basics

A heat pump is fundamentally a mechanical device that moves warmth from one place to another, as opposed to combusting a fossil fuel (such as gas) to create warmth. The unit is made up of an evaporator that collects the heat, a compressor to enhance it, and a condenser to deliver it into the main heating system.

In the UK, the most common form of heat pump is the air-to-water type. As the name implies, this moves heat from the ambient air via an outdoor evaporator unit, which then delivers it into the water within a home's central

Above: Offering heating capacity up to 5.8kW and cooling to 5.0kW, and A+++ rated for efficiency in both modes, the Daikin (www.daikin.co.uk) Emura air-to-air heat pump features a sleek, contemporary indoor unit

heating system or domestic hot water cylinder. The evaporator is usually housed in a box about the size of a couple of wheelie bins.

We commonly refer to air-to-water units under the catch-all name of air source heat pumps. These versions currently enjoy the support of a £7,500 grant under the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS), subject to certain eligibility criteria. This has boosted the sales and installation rates of air-to-water heat pumps – but in reality, they're not the only type of air source heat pump.

Air-to-air versions are also available. This approach moves heat from around the outdoor unit, just like an air-to-water appliance, but then transfers into the air supply going into the home. Delivery is via air handling units inside the building, which feature a condenser and fan to distribute the warmth. "Isn't that the same as air conditioning?" I hear you ask. Well, yes, it is – but an air-to-air heat pump is enabled to deliver space heating in winter, as well as cooling in summer. The technology is well-established and used a lot in hotter climates; so why isn't it more popular here?

What does an air-to-air install involve?

In recent years, we've encountered air conditioning in more aspects of our lives. Most of us have it in our cars or at work; stores and shops are now heated and cooled with air conditioning units; and many hotels use these systems as well. So why not fit air con in our homes?

A simple air conditioning or air-to-air system is fairly simple to install, but you'll need suitably qualified and experienced trades to do the refrigerant pipework and electrics. The system will have a fan unit on the outside of the building, which is around the same size as an air-to-water version. It's then connected to indoor units that can either be hidden in the ceiling, boxed-in around fitted furniture, or simply bolted onto the wall in the form of a bulkhead unit.

The outdoor and indoor devices are connected via two small pipes and a communication wire. Including insulation, the pipes are only about an inch thick, so with careful planning, they can be installed very discreetly. There's also a condensate pipe to take away any moisture that's created when the unit is cooling. This has a small pump built in, so the drain can be routed uphill if needed.

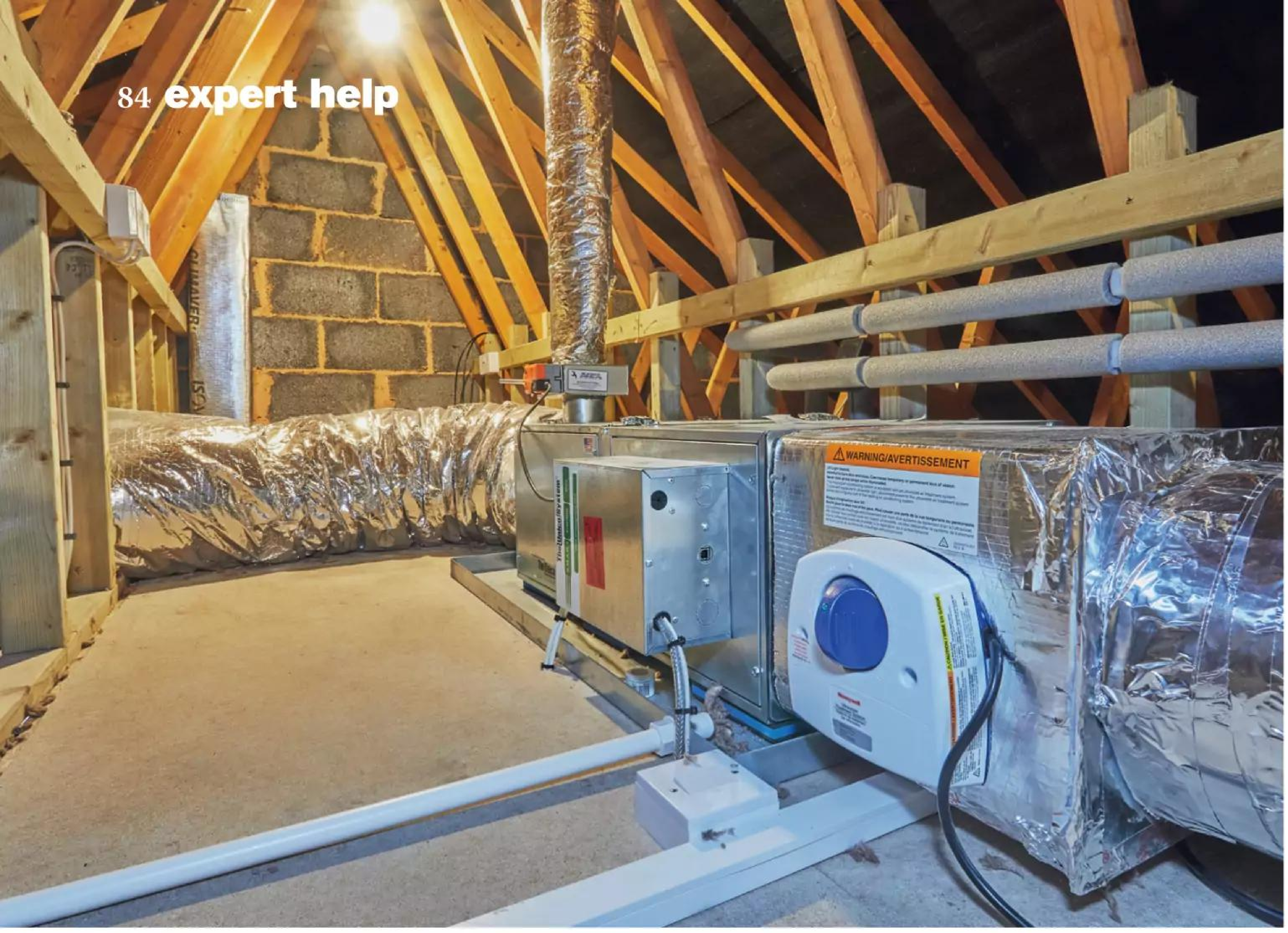
BOSCH
BOSCH

Above: The Climate 3000i by Worcester Bosch (www.worcester-bosch.co.uk) is a split air conditioning unit that offers an energy efficiency rating of A++ for cooling and A+ for heating

Pros & cons of air-to-air systems

Air heats up much faster than water, so this method of climate control can be seen as a more responsive heating system. It also needs only around a quarter of the energy water does to reach the same temperature. An air-to-air heat pump might therefore seem like a no-brainer to keep your house warm and cosy – but there are a few details you need to be aware of before specifying a system.

Firstly, a home's heat loss is the same no matter how you choose to maintain comfort levels. The air or water are simply the medium used to keep rooms warm. Air conditioning delivers heat by drawing air from the room



Top & above: The Unico System (www.unicosystem.co.uk) is an all-in-one heating, cooling and ventilation solution. The main air handling unit is usually located in the loft, with flexible supply tubes running off the central duct to discreet outlets (no bigger than a ceiling spotlight) in individual rooms

into the indoor unit, then warming it as it passes through the exchanger, before delivering the heated air back into the room. Air is the delivery mechanism, but not the distributor: in reality, the heat is distributed via refrigerant in liquid/gas form, then passed into the air.

As air passes through the indoor unit to heat up or cool down, it also gets drier, which dehumidifies it. Dehumidifying can be a good thing in a busy home, but too much of it can be detrimental and even lead to health issues. Humidity should therefore be monitored to ensure the right levels are maintained, especially when the unit is in cooling mode in summer.

Noise is another potential issue. The fan and condensate pump could cause slight disturbance, as could the flow of air itself, which is quite fast. An air-to-air system also can't supply domestic hot water, so you'll need another solution to deliver that.

By contrast, water-based central heating systems have more density – which means they can move warmth in greater volume. The water absorbs heat and delivers it to the room via radiators or underfloor heating. These emitters cost money, take up space and will require maintenance. They are quiet, however, plus they can potentially transfer the heat into the room even at low temperatures, allowing for different heat sources to be connected to them – from gas boilers to biomass, heat pumps and more – making them more versatile.

Central air-to-air systems

While the most common type of air conditioning system (multi-split) has units in each room, there is an alternative. The main air handler could be a central unit in a loft or ceiling void, or perhaps built into a cupboard, with ducting running from there to each room.

The ducts are typically at least 100mm in diameter and will often have insulation around them as well, so they are significantly easier to accommodate in a new build. A central system can help alleviate noise in the room, but the heating or cooling will usually be delivered to all the spaces simultaneously, making it difficult to regulate temperatures unless mechanical dampers are fitted and wired back to room thermostats.

Note that some systems address these areas. Unico, for instance, features a large-diameter main plenum duct, but then switches to 89mm supply tubes to serve individual rooms – which makes it easier to retrofit than some alternatives. It can also be set up as a zoned system to provide greater control over your indoor environment.

Final thoughts

Both air-to-air and air-to-water heat pumps deliver comfort heating. The former is also designed to deliver summer cooling, while the latter can supply a hot water cylinder. An air-to-water heat pump can actually deliver cooling, too, but this wouldn't be eligible for the BUS funding – plus it's not as effective as air conditioning.

There's also an extra heat exchange process with an air-to-water heat pump to transfer the warmth into the central heating system. This can make it slightly less efficient, but the air quality is not affected and there's no local noise in the room from air movement or fan motors.

Ultimately, while they use the same principle, they are very different – and you're not likely to be seriously comparing the two for your own project. Instead, you should list what your priorities are. Most of the time, you'll find only one system will tick all your boxes.

DAVID HILTON

David Hilton is a renewables and ventilation installer, with over 35 years' experience. He has a Masters in sustainable architecture, and is a respected authority on building fabrics, renewables and conventional heating.

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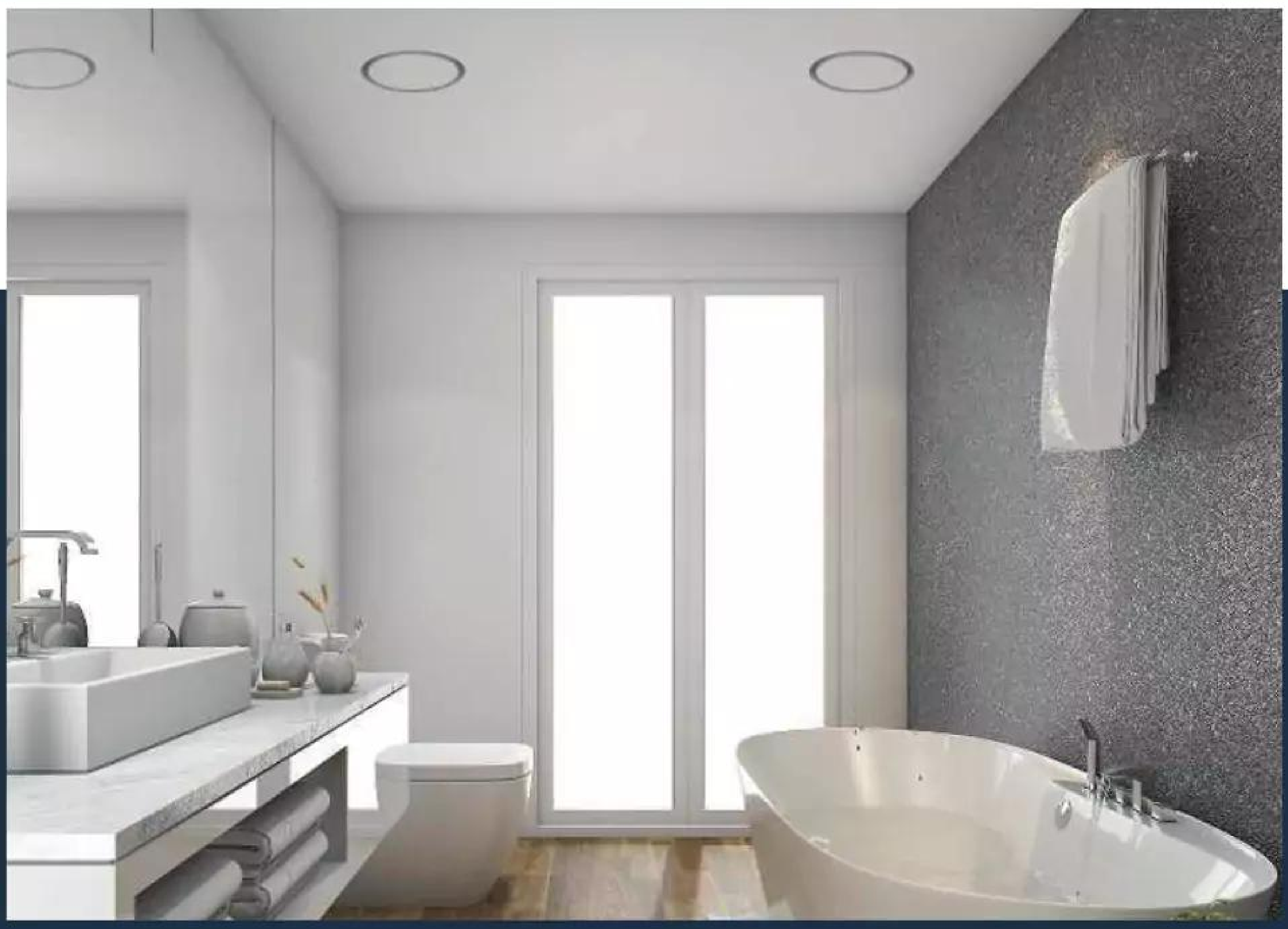

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WINDOWS FOR HIGH-PERFORMANCE HOMES

Internorm UK's **Vasilis Giannopoulos** sets out his top tips for achieving a quality glazing install

Above: A combination of Internorm's fixed and opening systems delivers wow-factor walls of glass in this striking project

Below: Specifying thermally efficient glazing can help to enable spectacular features, such as this near-frameless corner picture window by Internorm

Taking on a self build or major retrofit is an exciting opportunity to create a home that is not only stylish, but also perfectly tailored to your lifestyle and performance expectations. While energy efficiency is a major focus, a home should also deliver on security, durability and comfort.

Windows and glazing play a crucial role in this. They influence everything from heat retention and natural light, through to security and noise reduction. If you're investing in quality insulation, airtight construction and efficient heating systems, then your windows need to match the same level of performance. Here's how to ensure the glazing you specify meets – and exceeds – expectations.

Don't settle for minimum standards

The Building Regulations set out minimum performance requirements, but for a truly high-performing new build or retrofit that will stand the test of time, it's wise to go well beyond these benchmarks. Key regulations to consider include:

- **Part L (Conservation of fuel and power):** This defines maximum allowable U-values, which measure thermal efficiency, for windows and doors. New windows in existing homes should achieve U-value of 1.4 W/m^{2}K or better; in new builds 1.2 W/m^{2}K or better. Aiming for 0.8 W/m^{2}K or below will result in significantly improved performance and meet the requirements of Passivhaus.

- **Part Q (Security):** For new windows and doors, compliance with PAS24:2016 ensures robust resistance to forced entry. Internorm triple-glazed windows and doors include enhanced security features as standard and are PAS24 and Secured by Design certified.

Why high-performance glazing matters

In a well-insulated home, the windows and doors will be the weakest link in terms of heat loss through the building fabric. Choosing high-quality glazing can make all the difference. Here's what you should prioritise:

- **Triple glazing:** While double glazing has been the standard in the UK, triple glazed products with low whole-unit U-values of 0.8 W/m^{2}K or better provide considerably better insulation. This will reduce heat loss and improve comfort levels, especially during colder months.

- **Glazing type:** Look for windows with low-emissivity (low-E) coatings, argon or krypton gas-filled cavities, and warm-edge spacers to reduce heat transfer. In addition, Internorm glazing units are bonded to the frame, improving stability, burglary protection and thermal insulation.

Above: Internorm's lift & slide doors feature high-quality mechanisms to ensure smooth operation in the long term

TELL-TALE SIGNS OF A QUALITY WINDOW

How do you know if a window will perform well in the long run? Here are some key indicators:

1. **See the product in person:** Visit showrooms or exhibitions to see build quality first-hand. Good windows feel robust, with smooth operation and quality components.

2. **Check whole-window efficiency:** Don't just compare Ug-values for the glass; be sure you're also given information about the Uf-value for the frame as well as the Uw (whole window) value.

3. **Speak to experts:** Competent advice is key to identifying the best window option for your project. Internorm distribution partners have deep knowledge of product and installation, and offer a full consultation, survey and installation service.

4. **Examine the hardware:** Quality triple glazed windows require better hardware, due to the increased weight, to ensure smooth, reliable operation for many years.

5. **Check certifications & warranties:** Ensure windows are independently tested and certified. Look for PAS24/ Secured by Design for security, and CE or UKCA markings for safety and durability standards. Warranties can vary dramatically, so always compare what is and isn't covered.

- **Frame design:** Always opt for well-insulated frames to maximise thermal efficiency. Both Internorm's uPVC-aluminium and timber-aluminium frames include additional insulation to ensure that heat is not lost through the frame. Insulation is especially important in timber-aluminium windows to avoid excessive relative humidity on the wood's surface, which could otherwise lead to mould growth.

- **Triple gaskets:** These seals play an important role in minimising heat loss and improving airtightness. Internorm tilt & turn windows offer triple gaskets as standard.

Getting the installation right

Even the highest-performing windows will underdeliver if they are not installed correctly. A poorly fitted window can lead to thermal bridging, drafts and even moisture problems. To ensure a flawless installation:

- **Position within the insulating envelope:** Ideally, windows should be installed in line with the insulation layer rather than flush with the outer brickwork/cladding.

- **Address airtightness:** Use high-quality airtight tapes, expanding foam and/or specialist membranes to create a robust seal around the window frame.

- **Avoid thermal bridges:** The junction between the window and wall must be insulated correctly in order to prevent any unwanted heat loss.

- **Work with experienced installers:** Engage professionals who understand how to install high-performance glazing into a low-energy building fabric.

Glazing strategies for summer comfort

A well-insulated home retains heat effectively. This is hugely valuable in winter, but it can contribute to overheating in summer without proper planning. Here's what to consider to prevent excessive heat gain:

- **Orientation & window size:** South-facing windows capture the most sunlight, so consider reducing glazing in these areas or using suitable shading solutions.

- **External shading:** Overhangs, brises soleil, blinds and shutters can block direct summer sun, while still permitting plenty of natural light. Note that external solutions are always preferable to internal shading, particularly for windows on south- and south west-facing elevations. Nobody wants to live in a greenhouse!

- **Solar control glass:** This type of glazing reflects a portion of solar radiation, helping to keep indoor temperatures manageable. The downside is that in winter, when you want useful solar gain, it reduces the effect.

- **Ventilation:** Ensure windows allow for passive ventilation, particularly in bedrooms and living spaces to avoid overheating. The useful tilt function of Internorm windows can form part of purge ventilation.

Invest in quality

When undertaking a major project, every design choice should contribute to a comfortable, efficient and high-performing home. Glazing is no exception. A balance of high-performance units, shading and ventilation will keep your living spaces comfortable year-round. So, invest in windows and doors that go beyond minimum standards, choose high-quality materials, use expert installation services and plan for year-round comfort. Take these steps, and your windows will enhance the aesthetics and performance of your home for years to come.

VASILIS GIANNOPOULOS is specifications manager at Internorm UK and has worked in the window industry for over 30 years. He is a qualified Passivhaus designer and trainer, and is passionate about educating homeowners and architects about the benefits of quality, high-performance windows and doors. Call **020 8205 9991** or log on to **uk.internorm.com** for more information.

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Creating an eco-friendly kitchen

Want to make the hub of your home more sustainable? Nigel Griffiths looks at how to plan and realise a greener kitchen

Kitchens are probably the most resource-intensive room in the house to kit-out and use. They're also the spaces we update and change most often, in part due to wear and tear. So, to reduce environmental impact, it's important to get them right first time and give them as long a life as possible. If you just fancy a new kitchen every five years to keep up with the latest trends, it may be best to stop reading now!

Eco materials

The most significant environmental impact of a kitchen comes as a result of the materials we use to construct and furnish it. Here's some alternative spec solutions:

Kitchen cabinets are conventionally made from chipboard, which is high in formaldehyde (a recognised carcinogen). They're then coated in plastics, making a composite material that's impossible to recycle. This needn't be the case. Carcassing can be built using FSC-certified plywood, which is much lower in formaldehyde and easily recyclable. It's also more durable and resistant than chipboard or MDF, in particular to water – and leaks sadly do occur in kitchens occasionally.

Worktops are another example of an item where composite materials are commonly used. Instead of melamine chipboard, consider natural stone or solid wood for worktops. Much stone is imported, of course, so this adds to embodied energy. It may, however, still be lower than alternative materials and, importantly, it will last much longer. Solid timber will need to be sustainably sourced, but as a worktop it has a warmth and beauty that's hard to beat.

Flooring is a big-ticket item in kitchens. Many self builders and extenders will opt for stone or tiled floors, with underfloor heating and insulation built in from the start. If you're refurbishing an existing kitchen, you could use other eco materials, such as cork or renewable solid timber, such as bamboo. Laminates based on ply rather than MDF are an option, too. Don't overlook natural linoleum – it's made from linseed oil, unlike most modern versions, which are plastic-based and derived from fossil fuels. If you're fitting wall or floor tiles, you may prefer to use adhesives that are non-toxic and solvent-free. Do note, however, that some adhesives sold as being eco-friendly are genuinely natural, while others are a blend of polymers and sustainable materials.

Freestanding furniture is worth considering. It's perfectly possible to create a functional and beautiful

Above: To reduce reliance on artificial illumination, a series of Velux rooflights bring natural daylight into the task zones of this stylish Hux kitchen, which is part of a side-return extension by Zulufish

Left: The Panorama Pro 90 by Novy is a powerful four-zone induction hob with integrated down-draft extractor

Below: Qettle Original is a 4-in-1 tap that dispenses boiling water, filtered drinking water, plus normal hot and cold to save energy versus a standard kettle

WATER EFFICIENCY IN THE KITCHEN

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The bathroom is where the majority of water is used in the house, but kitchens also have a sizable impact. On balance, it is thought that dishwashers use less water than washing by hand, as the bowl needs to be changed occasionally. The most efficient modern dishwashers use less than half the water of older models. The thing that can really make a difference when hand washing is rinsing – some people leave the tap running throughout the process, and at – say – six litres per minute, this racks up quickly. If you use hot water for rinsing, the cost can become quite significant.

Recycling packaging also leads to increased water use. Food is a contaminant, which degrades the value of the recycling stream. So, we rinse recyclables before putting them into the bins. Depending on how you do this, it could add significantly to water use.

If you simply pop them in the bowl after dealing with any other hand-washed items, then water use might be minimal. But running a tap for a long period just to get the last few traces of bean juice from the tin is likely to be a waste of time, water and money. Perhaps this will become the subject of someone's PhD thesis one day!

kitchen using 'separates'. In other words, forget the conventional built-in kitchen units and invest in individual pieces of furniture – a dresser with drawers for cutlery, wall-hung cabinets for glassware, a larder cupboard, open-fronted storage for pots and pans, topped with solid beech work surfaces, and of course tables and islands.

The separates approach means a different cleaning regime. However, it gives you much greater freedom to choose and enjoy quality items of furniture (including second-hand items), which mean something individually to you. Kitchens built like this never wear out – individual items get replaced from time-to-time; but all-in-all, it's a much more sustainable approach.

Go second-hand. Buying a used kitchen (whether pre-installed or ex-display) can be a great way to save money – especially if you can pick up a pre-loved designer range at a bargain price. It also means you're reusing materials and reducing environmental impact. However, bear in mind you will inevitably need some adjustments and additions made – plus you'll probably still want to buy new flooring, appliances etc.

Upgrading existing kitchens

If you already have a fitted kitchen, you can sometimes upgrade it cost-effectively and give it a completely new look and feel without spending (or costing) the earth. In many cases, for instance, the carcassing for the wall and floor cabinets can be retained, with new doors and countertops fitted to achieve a fresh finish.

You should always budget to redo the tiles when using this approach – replacing worktops often disturbs them. This also gives you the opportunity to make alterations to power outlets and task lighting (or to add accent lighting), as well as updating a strong visual element of the kitchen.

Indoor air quality

When it comes to considering sustainability, many people's first thoughts are about energy use – but I'd suggest that we always ought to begin with human health. Food hygiene is, of course, essential. Yet we also need to consider air pollution in kitchens.

When gas is burned it gives off CO2 and water, both of which adversely impact air quality. Steam leads to condensation, which can result in mould growth, while high CO2 levels can cause various kinds of health problems. Electric hobs don't cause the same air pollution as gas hobs, plus they're easier and quicker to clean (though I've never mastered them).

The answer to both these issues is ventilation, and plenty of it. Purge ventilation can be achieved simply by opening the windows, but extract ventilation is also required in all wet rooms – ie kitchens and bathrooms. This should be controlled by humidity and CO2 sensors, with a manual override to boost extraction when needed.

Energy efficiency

We tend to focus on finding the best-rated low-energy appliances when thinking about this aspect of kitting out a kitchen. But the way we use our white goods is just as important, and can have a very significant overall impact. Here are just a few ways that our behaviour can affect how much energy we consume in the kitchen:

- **Pots boil** much more quickly on the hob if they're wearing lids.
- **Fridge doors** frequently get left open longer than needed.
- **Defrosting items** in the fridge (if done well ahead of time) can help it run more efficiently.
- **You can also save energy** when defrosting by using the room's ambient temperature or putting smaller items in a pan of warm water, rather than using the microwave.
- **If you're using the oven**, could it cook (or heat) more than one thing?
- **Fill the kettle** with just a little more than the water you need (and of course above the minimum line), rather than all the way up. After pouring the water out, refill with at least a cupful so that the heat dissipates to the liquid rather than to the room. This means if you boil it again soon, you'll be starting with warmer water.

Energy can of course be saved by careful selection of appliances. Induction hobs are more efficient than ceramic versions, for instance, while it stands to reason that a one-cup kettle will use less energy to boil a single mugful of water than a kettle that can cater for seven cups. The latest dishwashers use less energy than older models, and a microwave will cook a baked potato more quickly and efficiently than you can manage in an oven, albeit the skin won't be as crispy.

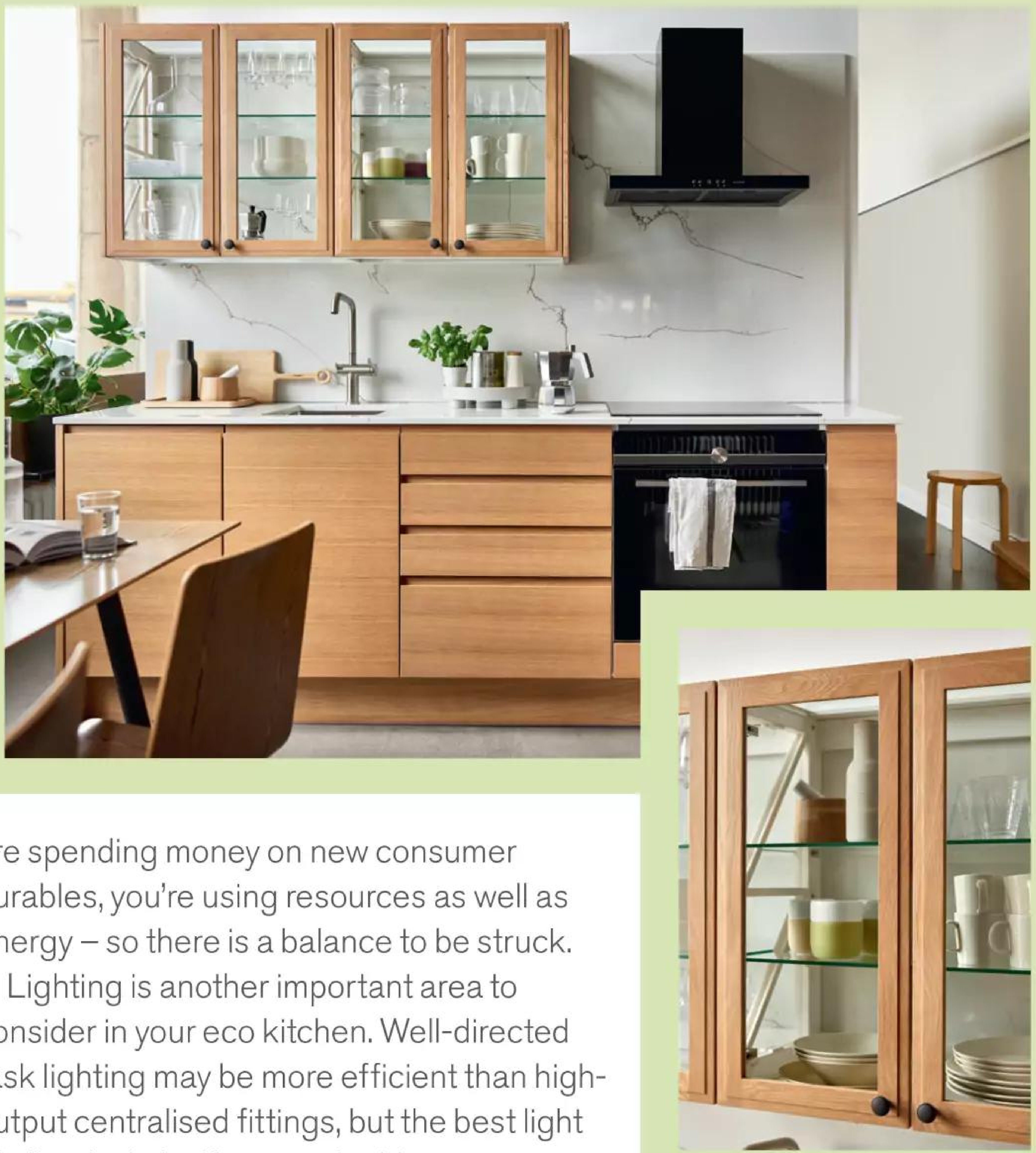
More recently, boiling water taps have been gaining popularity. It is true that these taps use significantly less energy to boil small amounts of water than a kettle. They're not cheap, however, and it would take a long time for any savings to repay this. Some versions offer the convenience of boiling, hot, cold and filtered water all from a single tap. Just remember that, whenever you are spending money on new consumer durables, you're using resources as well as energy – so there is a balance to be struck.

Lighting is another important area to consider in your eco kitchen. Well-directed task lighting may be more efficient than high-output centralised fittings, but the best light of all is daylight. If you are building new or carrying out extensive renovations, do what you can to maximise natural brightness in the kitchen, such as by introducing rooflights where possible.

CLOSER LOOK SUSTAINABLE BY DESIGN

Some kitchen suppliers are actively working to make their products more eco-friendly by using low-carbon, non-toxic materials and finishes. A case in point is the Puustelli Miinus range, available from Sustique, which only features products that have minimal environmental impact. Rather than conventional carcassing, these kitchens are made with biocomposite frames that are waterproof, emit zero VOCs, recyclable and use 50% less material than standard cabinets. What's more, the frames have a lifespan of over 75 years, so they can be reused many times.

Shown here is the Oak J-Pull kitchen, which features linen biocomposite frames, oak veneer doors, oak-and-glass cabinet doors, porcelain worktop and splashback, and A+ rated appliances. This specific design would cost **£11,801 + VAT**.



NIGEL GRIFFITHS

Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco-renovation and is the author of the Haynes Eco House Manual. He advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem. You can chat to Nigel at the Build It Live shows.

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CONTROLLING NOISE IN A NEW BUILD HOME

Unwanted sound transfer can blight an otherwise enjoyable home. Architect Opinder Liddar sets out the measures you can take to reduce and control noise, to achieve a peaceful and comfortable new house

Creating a home that's tailored to your needs and desires is an emotional investment, let alone one of the largest financial commitments you're likely to make. When embarking on your self build journey, a key goal will be to deliver a comfortable living environment. If there's one thing that can put paid to that dream, it's excess noise, which will drastically impact how you enjoy your new indoor and outdoor spaces.

The design of your home, materials it's constructed from and how they are put together make the difference between a sub-optimal home, and one that performs well. The Building Regulations (Part E – Resistance to the Passage of Sound) set out the minimum requirements, with some good technical guidance and examples of details that you could adopt as part of your own new build. However, they can be easily improved upon.

In my experience, most self builders invest the time and money needed to get things right – whether large or small – and end up with both a great design and exceptional build quality. The same goes for controlling noise, both from within and outside your home.

There are numerous ways you can reduce unwanted sound, but three common approaches are: creating mass; separating layers of construction; and installing sound-absorbing materials. Using one or – in some cases – a combination of these techniques can offer you a very comfortable environment in and around your home. It's important to specify the appropriate soundproofing method to address your particular concern. So, let's look at some common areas you may want to focus on.

1 DESIGN & ORIENTATION

If you are close to an external source of noise – such as a major road, railway or airport – the orientation of rooms and the number and locations of door and window openings will be important. You should also avoid placing ventilation extraction points in parts of the building that are more vulnerable to noise, as these weak spots will break the continuity of mass and allow sound to enter.

2 EXTERNAL FINISHES

You might be surprised to learn the soundproofing qualities of different construction systems – such as masonry or timber frame – are fairly similar, especially in designs where a layer of insulation is applied to their external surface. What goes on the outside of this,

however, is much more significant. Timber and metal cladding may not have sufficient mass to act as a means of soundproofing, for instance. An external leaf of brickwork or render is likely to be more effective.

3 DIG DOWN

If you have sufficient space on your plot, you could consider adding a full or partial basement. The resulting lower-level rooms could even open into courtyard gardens that are below the level of the rest of your site. The surrounding land mass will significantly reduce sound transfer – so, even in the noisiest of locations, a basement can create tranquil external space.

4 FLOOR BUILD-UPS

I've designed new homes that use concrete floor structures for the ground and intermediate storeys, adding mass and ensuring very little sound transfer between levels. However, to carry their own weight, concrete versions need be considerably deeper than engineered timber floors.

An alternative is to add a thin screed over the top of joisted systems. For instance, at Build It's Self Build Education House, we went with a heavyweight beam-and-block ground floor construction. The first floor, however, features a 40mm liquid screed laid on decked posijoists (strong engineered joists with a metal web that enables easy access for running services), with a layer of foamboard incorporated to enhance its acoustic properties and a membrane to hold the screed.

We also added mineral wool insulation between the joists, and a double layer of plasterboard in order to create the ceiling below. This delivered very effective soundproofing in an affordable and more versatile package that could suit a range of projects – whereas concrete or beam-and-block floors require a heavyweight walling system.

If you're refurbishing an existing building and don't have the height to accommodate a screed, there are alternatives for reducing noise transfer between storeys. One effective approach is to use high-density rubber sheeting as a top layer, covering the existing chipboard or floorboards, with your chosen floor finish above. Mineral wool insulation can be installed between the floor joists, and special hangers fitted to hold a high-density plasterboard ceiling.

5 WINDOWS

In order to comply with current Building Regulations, on most new build or refurbishment projects you will need to install double glazing.

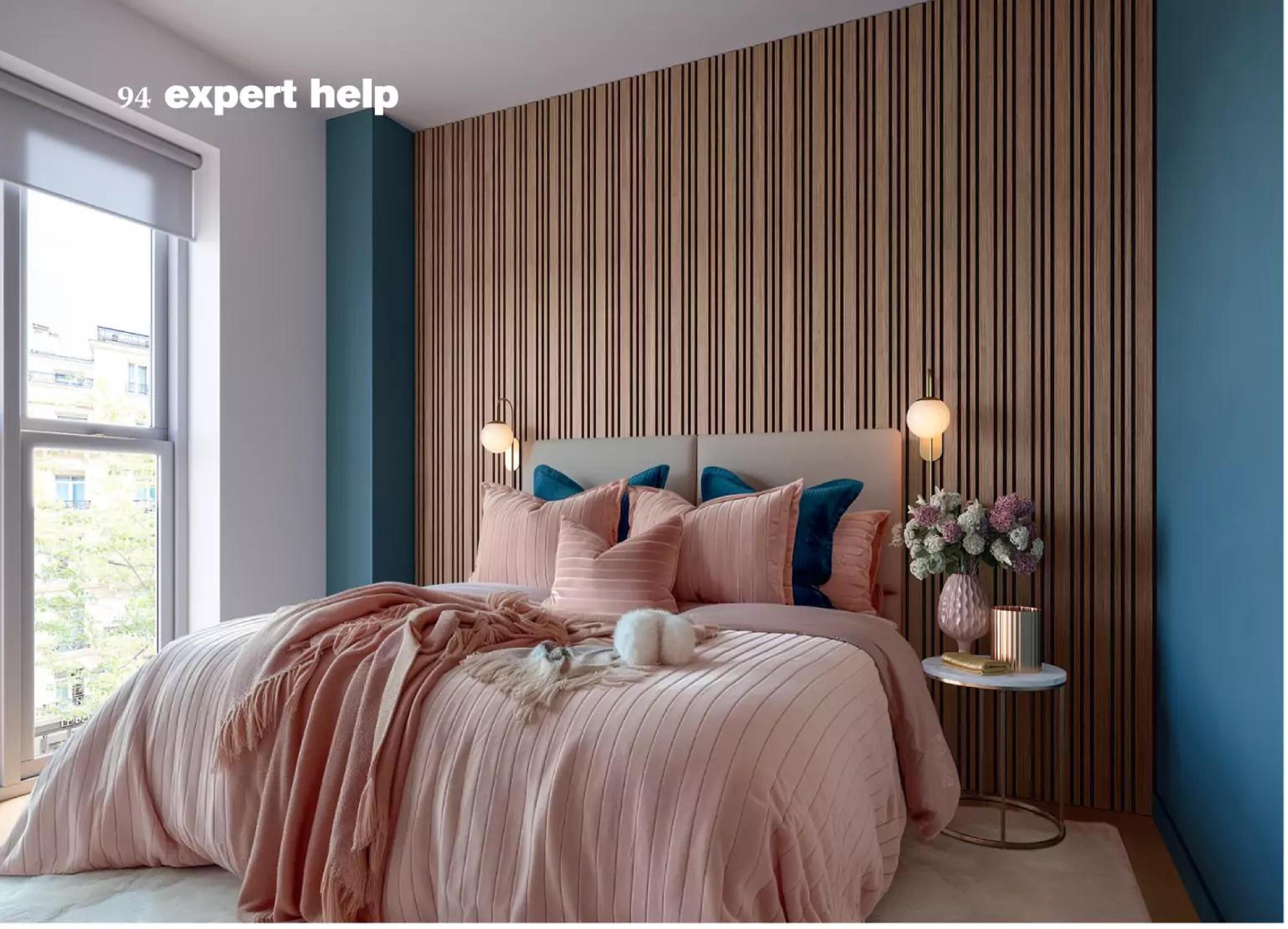
You may want to consider upgrading your windows to triple glazed units, which provide enhanced thermal performance. The additional layer of glass creates more mass and separation within the unit, improving sound insulation. Sound performance is specific to the particular window range you're installing, however, so do shop around. High-quality acoustic double glazing can be even more effective than standard triple; but won't offer the same energy-saving benefits. Talk to your supplier to understand the different options.

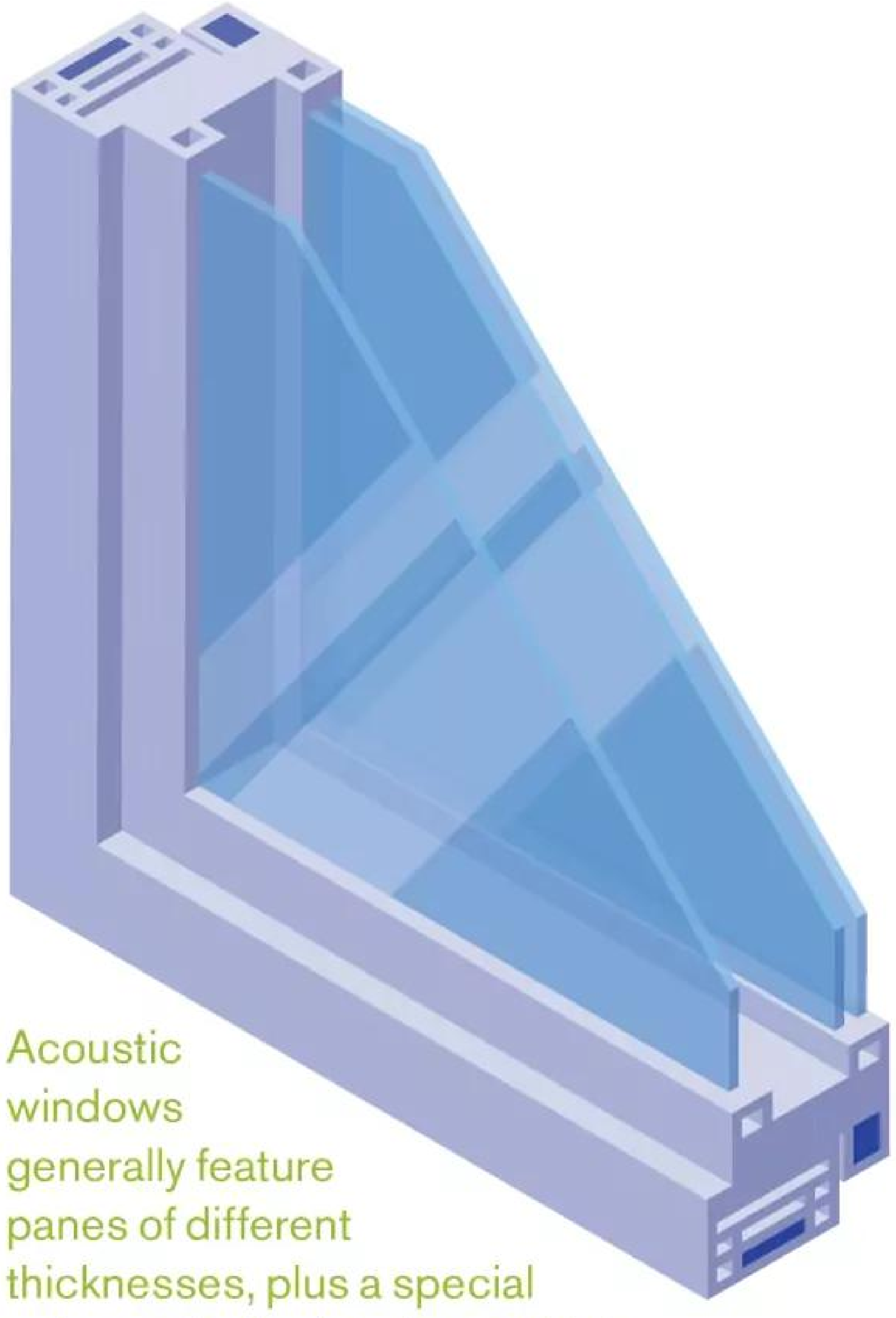
If you can't avoid installing windows in a location that faces a source of noise and pollution, you may want to avoid opening models. Instead, fit fixed (sealed) windows facing the road. You could then choose to install a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery (MVHR) system to draw fresh, clean air in from a quieter, less-polluted aspect of the building.

MATT CHISNALL

Above & left: Insulate internal partitions and ceilings with an acoustic product, such as mineral wool. Options include Rockwool (www.rockwool.com) and Isover stone wool from St Gobain (www.saint-gobain.com)

Below: This project by Paul Archer Design (www.paularcherdesign.co.uk) adds a basement storey under the existing house's footprint, with a stepped external lightwell. This kind of zone is highly sheltered from external noise





ISTOCK.COM/NASMAH MUNTAHA

Acoustic windows generally feature panes of different thicknesses, plus a special noise-reducing interlayer which work together to dampen sound transfer. Varying the cavities between triple glazed panes can also help

Above: These Trepanel Design Smoked Oak slatted wood veneer wall panels from Walls & Floors (www.wallsandfloors.co.uk) feature a black, rigid felt backing to absorb sound and reduce echoes in large rooms

Below: The acoustic first floor at Build It's Self Build Education House performs similarly to the beam-and-block structure between the basement and ground floor. The final build-up features posijoists, floor deck, dense foam insulation, membrane, UFH in the bathrooms and a 40mm-thick, self-levelling screed supplied by Screedflo (screedflo.co.uk)

6 INTERNAL WALLS

Opting for blockwork dividing walls on the ground floor will provide great sound proofing between rooms. It will also add thermal mass, which can help to regulate your home's internal temperatures. At first floor level, you'll usually be using joisted floors, which means switching to timber or metal stud walls. In this case, a useful upgrade is to install mineral wool between the studs. Aim to only partially fill the cavity, leaving a gap on one side, so that the insulation itself doesn't transfer sound.

I usually specify a layer of plywood or OSB behind the plasterboard on stud walls. This makes it easier to fix things to the walls, and also improves soundproofing compared to the very thin, uninsulated walls you often get in much developer-built housing.

7 LININGS & FINISHES

If the actual construction of the building cannot be changed, you could consider using sound-absorbent materials to line rooms. It is possible to install acoustic ceiling or wall panels that will absorb or diffuse sound waves, while a tapestry on the wall or rugs in a room can help to reduce excess noise and provide a very effective interior design solution. You will often see these kinds of measures adopted in large spaces, such as theatres or churches that would otherwise have very hard exposed walls and ceilings which reflect sound.

8 SERVICES

The build quality of a bespoke home is generally high, which means you're likely to achieve very good levels of airtightness. As a result, most new homes now rely on MVHR to bring fresh air into the house. The new supply is carried through ducts, which run to a central hub that manages the heat exchange (extracting warmth from stale outgoing air and transferring it into the fresh air). This ductwork needs to be properly planned into the initial design, carefully routed and sufficiently soundproofed so the pipes do not carry noise from one room to another.

Final thoughts

Retrofitting soundproofing can be challenging and costly, so it's important to think about this at an early stage in your design. If you do, the approaches I've recommended above will be relatively simple to implement and make a big different to your quality of life. So, make sure you discuss noise control with your designer in the initial planning stages. This way, they can specify relevant measures and develop suitable detailed drawings before you start construction – ensuring you have a home that will provide comfort and privacy for years to come.

OPINDER LIDDAR

Opinder Liddar is a Build It Award-winning designer and a director at Lapd Architects. He specialises in self build homes and renovation projects, and is a regular expert at Build It Live. For more information about Lapd Architects call 01865 407722 or visit www.lapdarchitects.co.uk

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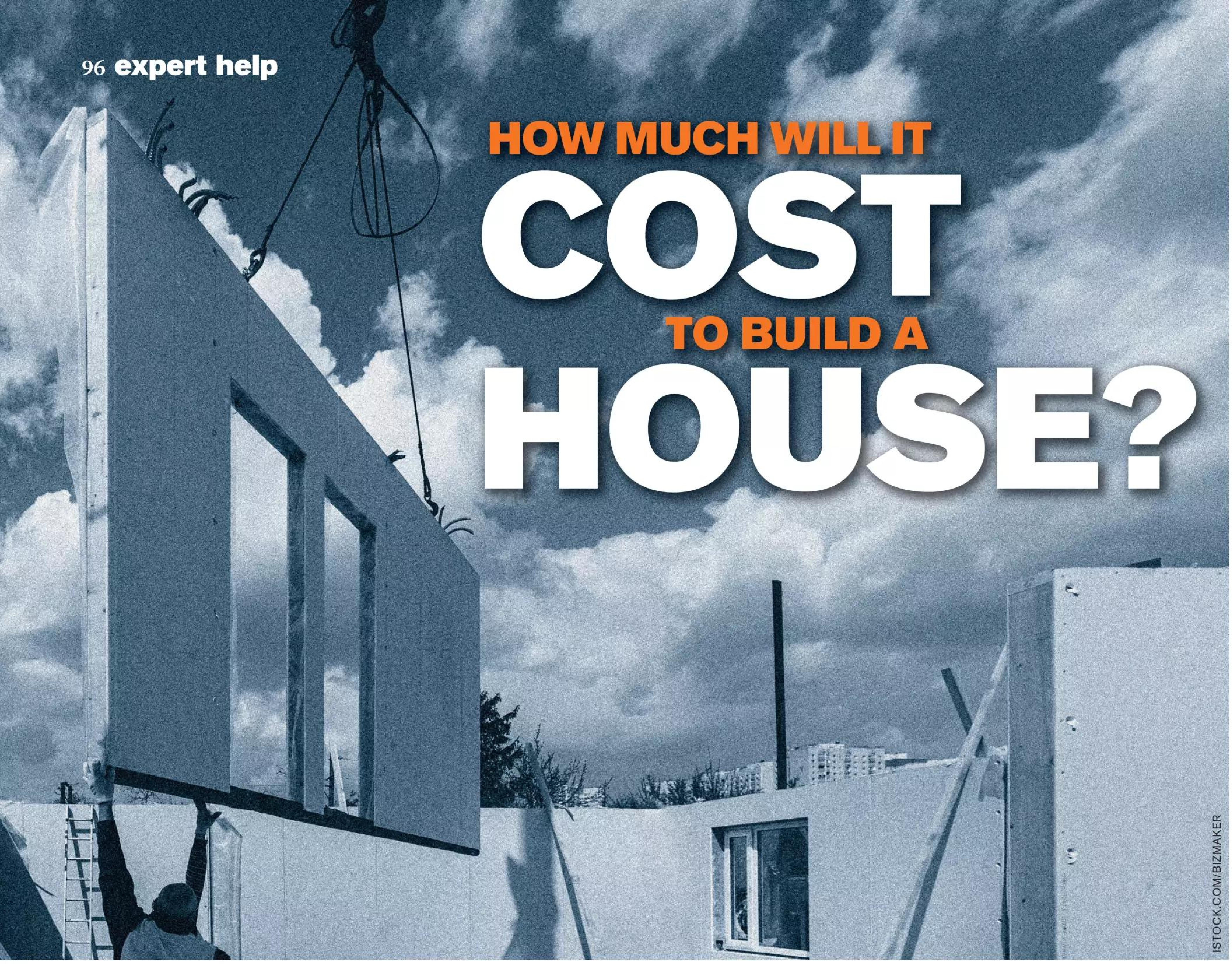

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HOW MUCH WILL IT COST TO BUILD A HOUSE?

Calculating how much it'll cost to take your dream home from concept to completion is arguably the most important aspect of a successful project. **Mark Stevenson** takes a look at what will impact your budget to ensure a smooth build from start to finish

If you're planning on building your own home, your first question should, and is likely to be, "how much will it actually cost to build?" The answer, however, depends on several different factors, including the size and complexity of the house, its location, the specification and how you'll manage the building project.

A larger, more complicated self build will naturally cost more in materials, labour and time. The location of the home matters, too, as some areas in the UK have higher construction costs due to demand for trades and materials. Specification also plays a big part, and high-end finishes or bespoke features push up prices, while a simpler, less complex scheme helps keep spending down. Your chosen build route is another key factor: self-managing the project yourself or taking on some of the work on a DIY basis can help save money; whilst hiring a main contractor or a turnkey provider will offer convenience but is likely to increase your overall costs.

How much does it cost build a house?

One of the best ways to get an idea of your build cost is by looking at the price per m² of completed floor space, otherwise known as the gross internal floor area (GIA). In 2025, an average self build is likely to cost **£2,500 per m²**. However, this is just a guideline. A cost-conscious, self-managed bespoke home project could come in as low as **£2,200 per m²**, while a high-end build with intricate detailing could easily exceed **£2,800 per m²**. Of course, some of you may well be working to much higher budgets – Build It has seen plenty of super-spec projects costing **£6,000+ per m²**.

The performance standard you aim for will impact your costs. A house built to minimum Building Regs will be cheaper than one designed to Passivhaus standards, which could cost around 20% more due to the additional insulation, various technologies, airtight construction, product certifications and completion testing.

With these costs in mind, if you're planning a 200m² home, a typical build cost could range from **£440,000-£560,000**, depending on a range of factors (such as size, location, and build route). If that figure sounds out of your reach, don't worry – it's possible to build a high-quality home on a tighter budget. **Here are five ways to stay on target when self building a brand-new home:**

1 START WITH A REALISTIC BUDGET

Before doing anything else, figure out how much you can afford to spend. This means assessing your available funds, including savings, equity and potential for borrowing. It's wise to speak to a mortgage broker early on to get a proper understanding of your borrowing power and level of affordability.

Once you know your total budget, compare it to your expected build costs. If the numbers don't add up, now's the time to adjust your plan – whether that means reducing the scale of the house, simplifying the design, or exploring cost-saving construction methods.

Don't forget to check the total development cost (land + build + fees) against the estimated end value of your completed home. Ideally, you'll create equity in the process, but if the figures don't add up, reconsider your approach.

2 PUT TOGETHER A DETAILED BUILD BUDGET

Many self builders run into trouble because they start without fully understanding what their project will cost. To avoid nasty surprises later, you need a clear and proven itemised budget set out well before you start. To prove the budget, send out enquiries using your drawings and a detailed scope of work (what you want to be included). It's a good idea to include a specification list, containing materials and finishes, and don't forget to thoroughly read through the quotations you receive to check they include what you want.

Total cost	**£550,000**
Total size	273m²
Cost per m²	£2,015
Plot size	0.25 acre
Plot cost	£450,000
Completed	2022
Current value	£1,500,000

KATHERINE MALONDA

CASE STUDY

Build It readers Rick and Julie Anderson replaced a former chicken shed with a beautiful two-storey home nestled into the Kent countryside, inspired by local rural architecture. The main front and rear elevations showcase extensive triple glazing, complemented by durable composite cladding, reclaimed ragstone and low-maintenance concrete roof tiles

3 REDUCE THE RISK OF COST OVERRUNS

No self build project is exempt from unexpected costs, but you can minimise potential risks with careful planning. Investigate your plot's ground conditions before you start on site, as unforeseen foundation work is a common budget-buster. A detailed ground survey and structural engineer's report can provide clarity and prevent costly surprises.

Check the scope of work and specification carefully before accepting quotes. The more precise you are, the less likely you'll need to make expensive alterations later down the line. One of the biggest causes of budget overruns is changing your mind, so bolt things down and try to avoid any inclination to modify your scheme.

Professional fees can also creep up on you. Architects and engineers, for example, charge a percentage of the total build cost, meaning their fees rise as your budget increases. Where possible, you should look to negotiate fixed prices to prevent any conflicted interests from a money point of view.

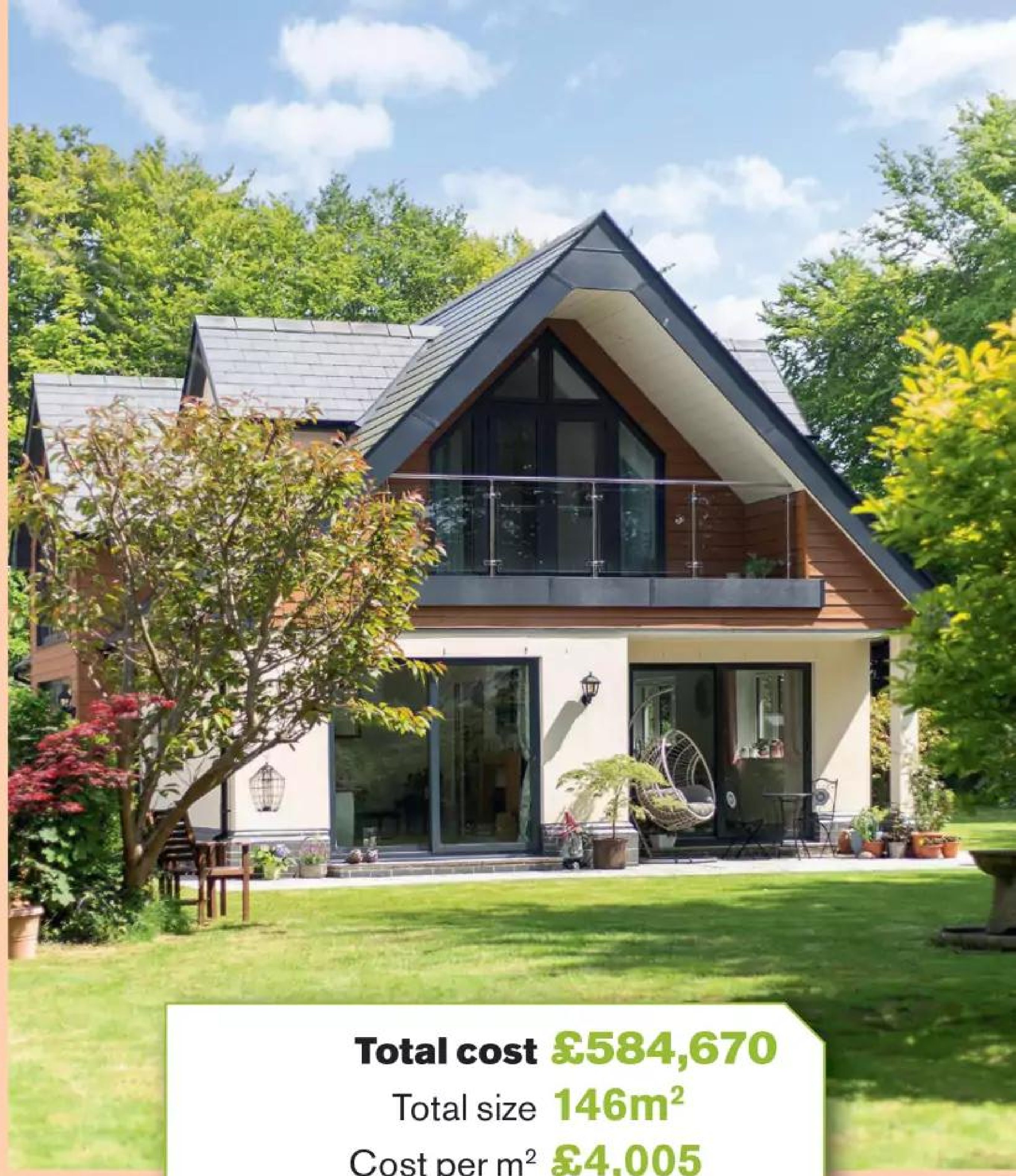
4 KEEP COSTS UNDER CONTROL DURING THE BUILD

Once construction is underway, strong commercial control is critical. You should set up a budget tracker to compare actual, real-time costs against your original plan. By tracking costs, your budget will act as an early warning system, helping to spot overspends early so savings can be made before money becomes a problem.

Cash flow is equally as important. If you're relying on a self build mortgage, remember that funds are released in stages. Make sure this is set up in a way that means you have enough money available to pay suppliers and contractors on time, so work isn't delayed.

A risk and opportunity register can also be very useful. This is a straightforward document that helps you to manage commercial matters by focusing your attention on potential risks (price increases or complex details) alongside cost-saving opportunities, such as bulk discounts on different products (such as cladding materials) or specification upgrades/downgrades.

FOURWALLS



CASE STUDY

Total cost	**£584,670**
Total size	**146m²**
Cost per m²	**£4,005**
Timber kit cost	**£250,000**
Timber kit cost per m²	**£1,404**
Completed	**2023**

After Build It readers Len & Yvonne Rose's cottage was destroyed in a fire, they decided against moving to a different location and instead self built a new home on the same plot. The couple opted for a timber frame package from Scandia-Hus for the house's structure, specified on a shell package basis, sourcing their own contractor to erect the frame

THE DO'S AND DON'TS

WHAT TO DO

- ✔ **Get expert advice early** Speak to professionals before you start designing to ensure your budget is realistic. Free consultations at shows such as Build It Live can offer valuable insights.
- ✔ **Monitor spending closely** Keep track of costs throughout the build and adjust as needed to avoid any surprises that could steer you off-track.
- ✔ **Plan for cash flow** If using a self build mortgage, know when funds will be released and plan your project schedule accordingly.
- ✔ **Source materials wisely** Shopping around can save money, but always balance cost with quality.
- ✔ **Minimise waste** Order only what's needed and reuse materials where possible.
- ✔ **Create a positive site environment** A well-organised, happy site attracts good builders, which helps avoid delays and unnecessary expenses.

WHAT NOT TO DO

- ✘ **Don't be unrealistic about costs** Factor in everything, including hidden costs like professional fees, landscaping and interior finishes, even if your budget looks tight.
- ✘ **Don't cut the contingency fund** Unexpected expenses will happen, so keep at least 10%-20% in reserve just in case you need it.
- ✘ **Don't opt for experimental construction methods** Stick with proven building techniques that are widely understood and can offer budget certainty. Prefabricated systems, including timber frame or SIPs, help keep costs predictable.
- ✘ **Don't go for the cheapest quote** Cheaper isn't always better. Skilled professionals and trades will do a high-quality job first time, preventing costly mistakes and potentially needing to redo works.
- ✘ **Don't do DIY (especially if you're not very good at it)** DIY tasks like painting and tiling can save money, but you'll need a level of skill and time to do a proper job. Consider what you can take on.
- ✘ **Don't make last-minute alterations** Changing your mind will have consequences and often drive up your overall project costs.

5 BE SMART ABOUT WHERE YOU SPEND

Always focus your budget on the most important elements. Structural components, such as foundations and external walls, might look expensive but they're essential and can't be changed later, so get this right from the start. In comparison, finishes and fittings can often be upgraded later, so it's possible to consider budget-friendly options and improve them over time.

Offsite-manufactured systems, such as timber frame or SIPs, offer cost certainty and predictable pricing as well as quicker build times, helping you to stay on budget. Sourcing materials yourself can also yield good savings – contractors won't always hunt bargains, but if you've got the time, look for supplier discounts, ex-display kitchens and surplus materials.

By setting a realistic budget, planning carefully, and keeping tight control of spending, you can build a high-quality home without the worry of busting your budget. The key is to understand where your money is being spent and remaining open-minded to savings when the opportunity arises. As long as you're prepared to control your spending, roll up your sleeves and get involved, self building a home doesn't have to come with a nightmare price tag and will be a fantastic financial investment.

MARK STEVENSON

Mark Stevenson has worked as a construction professional for over 35 years and is a serial self builder. He runs project management consultancy Elsworth Projects and, as chair of NaCSBA, advocates for the interests of self builders and contributes to the success of the emerging custom build industry.

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PLANNING 101

HOW DOES THE UK PLANNING SYSTEM WORK?

Planning expert Martin Gaine sets out what you need to know about the process to ensure a successful application from the outset

Right: Situated in rural Hertfordshire, this replacement home, designed by Snell David Architects (www.snell-david.co.uk), draws inspiration from the original modernist house, which helped the design gain planning approval

Below right: A sympathetic design scheme helped this house extension, masterminded by ID Architecture (www.idarchitecture.co.uk), sail through planning. The sensitive, two-storey addition calls back to the home's Edwardian and Tudor architecture, acting as natural extension of the original building

Getting planning permission can be a major hurdle for some, and it often feels like the system is impossible to navigate successfully. Whether you're self building, extending or undertaking a conversion, having a better grasp of how the planning process works can save you time, money and heartache.

In this article, I'm exploring the history of the UK's planning system, going right back to its foundation after the end the Second World War, how it functions today, and how you can use this information to make your way through the planning maze and achieve a successful end result.

The Town and Country Planning Act 1947

It can be surprising to learn that the UK had no real planning system prior to 1947. For hundreds of years, the country was largely rural and agrarian, and landowners mostly built whatever they wanted. This began to change with the industrial revolution, which created new pressures from an urbanising population. In the early 20th century, there was a new awareness of the need to control suburban sprawl and create better living conditions.

The end of the war brought a desire for meaningful change, as well as a need to rebuild cities that had been reduced to rubble. The result was the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, which established a new system under which local authorities would draw up plans to guide the development of their areas. It also meant that landowners would be required to make planning applications, which would be assessed in light of those plans.

The Act created whole new towns, like Stevenage in the South East of England, and Runcorn in the North West. It also introduced most of the key features of the planning system that we are familiar with today: planning appeals, enforcement, listed buildings and green belts (to stop existing cities spreading too fast into the countryside).

Alongside these features came the introduction of permitted development (PD) rights, allowing a variety home improvements to take place without planning permission. Fascinatingly, these included food protection rules in back gardens to help ease rationing, and one permitting "cat's-meat" and tripe shops to change to "any type of shop".

DAVID VALINSKY

ANDY HASLAM

FRENCH + TYE

Above & left: Set within a Muswell Hill conservation area, this sensitive renovation, loft conversion and extension by Matthew Giles Architects (www.matthewgilesarchitects.com) makes use of a contextual design scheme to ensure minimal disruption to the original Edwardian home's facade

The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act has survived largely intact to this day. Its descendant, the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, is the cornerstone of the planning system in England and Wales today (Scotland and Northern Ireland have similar but distinct systems).

What is classed as development?

At the heart of planning law is the concept of development. Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 defines development as: "The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land."

This essentially means that you will require planning permission for building works, and for material changes of use. A material change is one that carries some significance (ie it is not so minor that it is unimportant).

Section 55 also sets out two major exceptions to its definition of development – any works that only affect the interior of a building and any works that do not have a material effect on (that is, don't really change) the building's external appearance. It is a key feature of the planning system that most internal changes to a building do not require planning permission. This is because, by definition, they are not classed as development.

The plan-led system

The Town and Country Planning Act aims to make the planning system simple and transparent. It insists that decisions are made on the basis of adopted policies, with the expectation that applicants would read and understand them before submitting for planning and therefore have a good idea whether their application will be successful. This is known as the plan-led system.

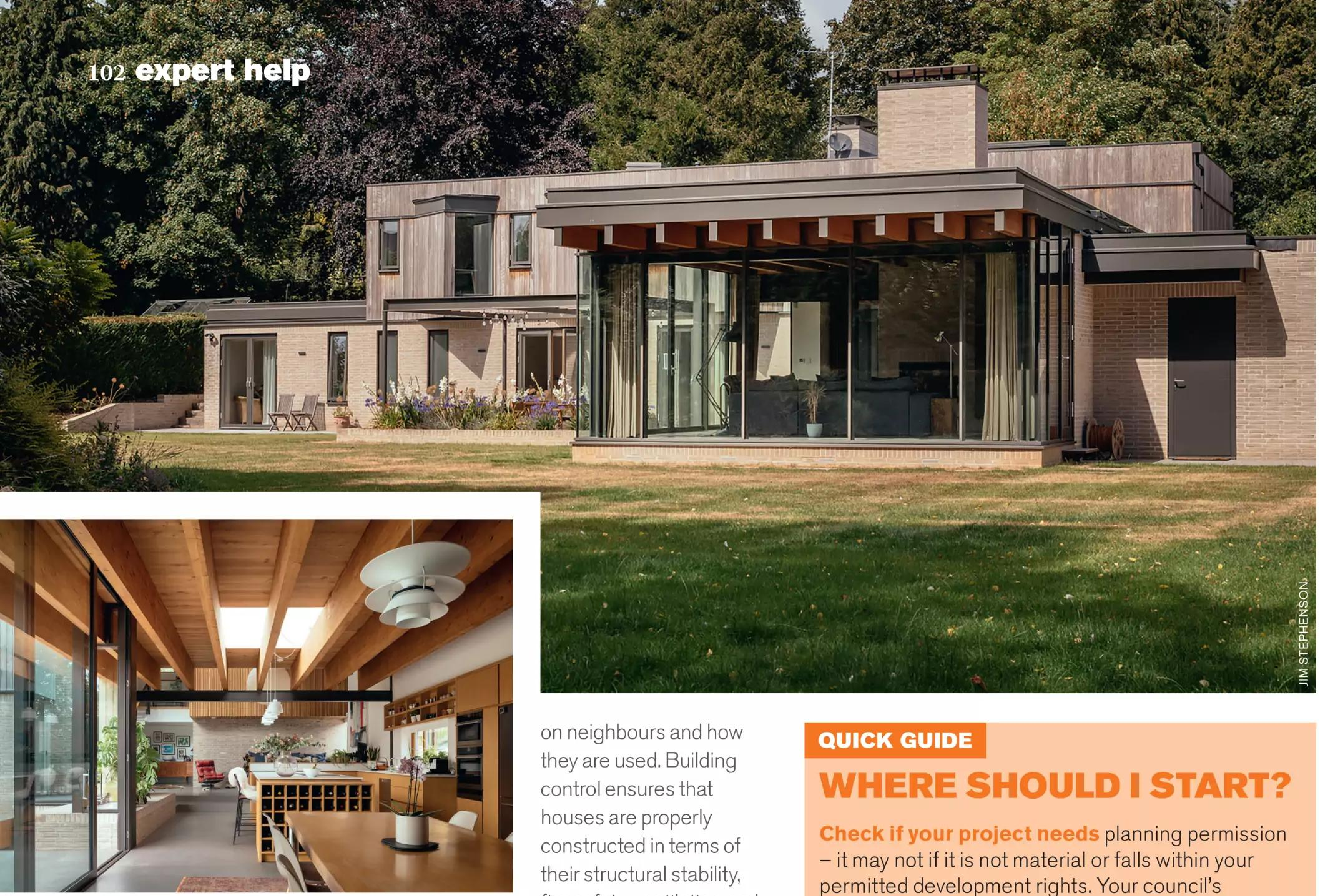
Whether certain policies are relevant to your proposal depends partly on your site constraints – is it in the green belt, for example, or a conservation area, or does it have a listed status? If you can work out which constraints apply to your site, and read the relevant policies on development, you should be on track for an approval.

Although policies should make decisions predictable, the reality is, of course, somewhat different. Firstly, policies are subject to interpretation – if the paperwork states that a new self build house should be of good design and blend in with its surroundings or local architecture, it is purely a matter of judgement whether your proposal complies.

In addition, the Town and Country Planning Act states that decisions must take account of any 'other material considerations'. A material consideration is anything that is relevant to the assessment of your application. Planning policies and site constraints are obviously material, but so is the planning history (what applications you or others have made in the past) and specific site circumstances (such as the presence of existing structures on the site, or a close relationship with neighbouring properties).

Planning control vs building control

A common source of confusion is the difference between planning permission and Building Regulations approval. While both are required for most development projects, they serve different purposes. The planning system focuses on the appearance of buildings, their impact



Above & inset: Designed by Levitate Architects (www.levitate.uk.com), this self build in a conservation area replaces a two-storey house, adopting a modest design that sits perfectly against its verdant backdrop

on neighbours and how they are used. Building control ensures that houses are properly constructed in terms of their structural stability, fire safety, ventilation and insulation. These systems operate independently, meaning approval under one system doesn't guarantee that you will be granted consent under the other.

How to navigate the planning maze

It is understandable that homeowners and developers find the system difficult to figure out, but it is a mistake to give up entirely, assuming that the system is impossibly complicated or hopelessly corrupt. Though planning decisions can be variable, you can reduce that variability by ensuring your proposal takes as much account as it can of the relevant planning policies.

In England, there is a single document that provides the highest-level strategic guidance. It is called the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and it is worth a read (don't worry, it's only 82 pages long), especially if you want a better understanding of how the system operates.

However, it does not contain the detailed regional policies that really determine whether you will be granted planning permission for a small-scale development. These are mostly contained within local planning documents, and differ from council to council. To view yours, go to your authority's website (usually councilname.gov.uk), click on planning, and then policies. You will be presented with a variety of policy documents of different types. It may take time to work out which sections are relevant to your specific project, but don't be daunted.

For no good reason, there is no uniform naming system for these documents. Some councils call them the local plan, but they can be called the core strategy, strategic policies or development management policies. There will also be a proposals map: a plan of the area showing geographic restrictions, such as the extent of the green belt or the boundaries of conservation areas.

Of course, you don't need to read all this information yourself – that is why you have instructed an architect or planning consultant. However, do make sure that your agent has a good understanding of the relevant policies: if you've found someone to make an application on your behalf, they need to be able to clearly explain how your proposal will assessed and why it is likely to be successful.

QUICK GUIDE

WHERE SHOULD I START?

Check if your project needs planning permission – it may not if it is not material or falls within your permitted development rights. Your council's website should have some guidance, or you can use the Planning Portal's interactive guides.

Many local authorities offer pre-application consultation services. For a fee, planning officers will provide feedback on your proposal before you submit a formal application, potentially saving you time and money on revisions later.

Review your local plan to understand the policies that will apply to your particular planning application. Pay close attention to any local design guides or site-specific policies.

Look up your local council's planning database for planning applications similar to what you are proposing. The officer's report is a document produced by the case officer when a decision is made – it gives valuable insights into how different types of proposals are assessed in practice.

MARTIN GAINE

Martin Gaine runs planning consultancy Just Planning (www.just-planning.co.uk). A former case officer, he has experience on both sides of the planning divide and now specialises in helping homeowners win consent at appeal. He is the author of How to Get Planning Permission: An Insider's Secrets.

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FINANCE
Rachel Pyne is director of financial services at BuildStore (www.buildstore.co.uk). She has worked in self build finance for over 10 years and deals with a diverse portfolio of lenders across the whole market, as well as on exclusive self build and renovation mortgage products.

SUSTAINABILITY
Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco-renovation and was the author of the Haynes Eco House Manual. He advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem. You can chat to Nigel at the Build It Live shows.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Mark Stevenson has worked as a construction professional for over 35 years and is a serial self builder. He runs project management consultancy Elsworth Projects and, as chair of NaCSBA, advocates for the interests of self builders and contributes to the success of the emerging custom build industry.

PERIOD PROPERTIES
Alan Tierney is a period property and conservation specialist. He ran an historic building consultancy, offering hands-on advice to heritage homeowners, but is now focused on renovating yet another property: Old Barnstaple House.

DESIGN
Opinder Liddar is a director at Lapd Architects (www.lapdarchitects.co.uk). The practice specialises in residential projects from extensions to new builds, making him the ideal person to answer all your home design questions.

VAT RECLAIMS
Andrew Jones has worked within the construction industry for almost 40 years. With 15 years of experience processing DIY VAT reclaims (www.vat431.co.uk), he provides invaluable insight for self builders.

PROJECT MANGEMENT

Am I able to be my own principal contractor for my self build?

I am currently in the process of designing my dream home and was wondering if it's possible to assign myself as the principal contractor for the project?

Technically there is no reason why you could not act as both the client and the principal contractor. You need to make sure you meet the definition of a contractor; and can demonstrate that you have the necessary competencies to undertake the role.

The duties are primarily outlined in the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (CDM) 2015 and the Building Safety Act 2022. Under CDM, a contractor is defined as anyone who directly employs or engages construction workers, or who, as part of their business, manages or controls construction work.

As the principal contractor, you will be responsible for planning, managing and overseeing the entire construction phase and ensuring all health and safety requirements are met. This includes preparing a build plan, ensuring that the site is a safe place to work and has appropriate welfare facilities. Additionally, under the Building Safety Act, you'll need to guarantee that all work complies with the necessary regulations and reject any non-compliant work.

Importantly, under both the CDM and the Building Safety Act, principal contractors are required to demonstrate that they have the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours to carry out the role. There is no defined route to demonstrating competency, however some examples include completing formal training, or evidencing suitable experience via a portfolio of completed projects.

Whilst a client can take on the role of principal contractor, be cautious. Very few people outside the professional field have the expertise to safely and effectively manage a construction site. Failing to comply with regulations, or taking on work outside your capabilities, can have consequences not only in terms of safety on the site, but can also result in costly delays or even prosecution.

ISTOCK.COM/SKYNESHER

ISTOCK.COM/PHOTOGRAFEUS

VAT RECLAIMS

Can I reclaim VAT if I add a garage to my existing project?

We have decided to change our initial building plans and add a garage. Are we able to claim back VAT even though this was not part of the original scheme?

You can make amendments to your plans or even submit a new or additional planning application and reclaim for the entire project from its original commencement. This is subject, to the items and project qualifying. In this specific case, where you have submitted an additional application, this must be built within the same timeline as the main dwelling and any qualifying items included in your project-wide VAT reclaim application. This must be done within six months of receiving building control sign-off. The trigger for the six-month countdown is building control sign-off on the main house (not any subsequent works). If you have a second building control application for the garage and subsequently delay the VAT reclaim submission to receive building control sign off for this, your refund could be in danger if the timeline runs past the sign off date for the main dwelling.

PLANNING

Do I need to submit a BNG report?

I am looking to sub-divide my existing property and I am aware I need to provide additional parking spaces, recycling and cycle storage. Would I also need to provide a biodiversity net gain report with my application?

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is a government policy that requires new developments to make a positive impact on the natural environment. For smaller developments like yours, it took effect in April last year and it requires self builders to deliver a 10% uplift in biodiversity, with the intention that habitats are in a better condition after development than before.

Although the intention was that it should be possible to calculate the BNG requirements yourself, most people tend to use consultants, and this can be rather expensive.

You may not be aware that there is currently an exemption available for certain householder developments, such as extensions as well as for self builders.

It sounds like you might be able to take advantage of the 'de minimis' exemption, which is for developments that impact less than 25m² of habitat and does not impact a priority habitat. If your proposal is a conversion only, and the external changes for the parking and bin store areas affect less than 25m² of habitat, you may fall within these parameters.

To claim the exemption, you or your agent will just need to fill in the relevant section of the planning application form when submitting your project's application.

SIMON BURT

Toby Diggens and Bella Lowes restored and rebuilt a derelict barn in Dorset under the Living Building Challenge, which celebrates the wider setting of a building and its ecological impact

PLANNING

Does building a cellar fall under permitted development?

I want to build a basement in my garden. The land is not in a protected area and there are no buildings on it except for my home. Do I need to seek formal planning or are such projects pre-approved?

The question of whether planning permission is required for basements and cellars is a tricky one. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 specifically states that permission is required for "engineering [...] operations in, on, over or under land." However, homeowners also have permitted development (PD) rights, meaning that they do not need planning for specific types of builds. Class E allows the construction of outbuildings, such as sheds or summer houses, subject to some limitations.

One option could therefore be to build a structure in your garden with a cellar beneath it. Would this qualify for Class E? I don't see why not, in principle, but it is possible that your council would argue that the cellar element is a substantial engineering operation that requires its own separate consent.

The safest way to proceed is to have the plans drawn up and apply to the council for a lawful development certificate. This means you're seeking official confirmation that what you're proposing falls within PD. I think it would be risky to proceed with your development without first obtaining formal verification from the council that they accept it does not require planning permission.

ANY QUESTIONS?

**Send all your self build, renovation and conversion questions to buildit@castlemedia.co.uk or visit www.self-build.co.uk/question
Please note all correspondence may be published in the magazine**

Don't risk receiving less money than expected for your project!

Only a cost based mortgage from BuildStore can offer guaranteed funds matched to your project costs.

Stage release payments are agreed as part of the mortgage application and are not dependent on interim lender valuations during the build, removing any risk of down valuations.

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Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.

There may be a fee for mortgage advice. The actual amount you pay will depend on your circumstances. The fee is up to 1% but a typical fee £395.

Self build & custom build mortgage table

Looking to fund your bespoke home project? Each month we round up the best deals from leading lenders and update you on what you need to know to secure the right finance

Advance Stage Payment Mortgages

Created by and exclusive to BuildStore, these mortgages provide guaranteed stage payments based on your costs before each phase of the build. This offers certainty in your budget and peace of mind that you can plan for and pay your bills on time.

Arrears Stage Payment Mortgages

These mortages release funds after each stage of building works is completed. To trigger the payments, a valuation must take place that shows an uplift in value. BuildStore's exclusive mortgages can offer increased borrowing of up to 85% of your costs.

Get In Touch

For advice on funding options for your self or custom build project, speak to the experts at BuildStore by calling **0345 223 4647** or visit **www.buildstore.co.uk**

These products are chosen for illustrative purposes, and were available at the time of going to press.

KEY FOR TABLE: ★ BuildStore Exclusive Product | SB Self Build Mortgage | CB Custom Build Mortgage | LTV Loan to Value

Lender		Mortgage Type	Payment Schedule	Contact	LTV Land	LTV End Value	Interest Rate	1st Stage Payment
Bath BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	95%	85%	6.24%	DPP & Building Regs
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.29%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.99%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.24%	DPP & Building Regs
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	6.14%	DPP & Building Regs
Loughborough BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 233 4647	80%	80%	6.25%	DPP & Building Regs
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	5.99%	DPP & Building Regs
Newcastle BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	90%	90%	6.80%	DPP & Building Regs
Tipton & Coseley	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	6.25%	DPP & Building Regs
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.59%	DPP & Building Regs
Bath BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	95%	85%	6.04%	Foundations
Chorley BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	50%	60%	5.95%	Foundations
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.09%	Foundations
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	70%	70%	5.59%	Foundations
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.93%	Foundations
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	6.04%	Foundations
Loughborough BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 233 4647	80%	80%	6.15%	Foundations
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.80%	Foundations
Newcastle BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	90%	90%	6.60%	Foundations
Stafford Railway BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.15%	Foundations
Tipton & Coseley BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	5.74%	Foundations
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.39%	Foundations
Beverley BS		SB	Arrears	01482 881 510	50%	80%	6.04%	Wall Plate
Earl Shilton BS		SB	Arrears	01455 844 422	75%	75%	6.34%	Flexible
Hanley BS		SB	Arrears	01782 255000	80%	80%	6.49%	Foundations
Melton Mowbray BS		SB	Arrears	01664 414 141	n/a	75%	6.00%	Foundations
Penrith BS		SB	Arrears	01768 863 675	80%	80%	5.99%	Foundations
Saffron BS		SB & CB	Arrears	0333 015 2970	80%	80%	6.24%	Flexible
Suffolk BS		SB	Arrears	0330 123 0723	80%	80%	5.95%	Foundations

Xerim Developments

Architect led sustainable development

Seagate Passive House, Hastings

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Building plot with full planning permission & pre-commencement conditions discharged. **£295,000**

This 4/5 bed Passive House design is packed with so many unique features, we couldn't possibly fit them all in to one advert.

Head to xerim.co.uk for full details.

Does your basement require waterproofing?

Surrey Basements design and install all aspects of waterproofing to BS8102:2022 the British standard. We are CSSW surveyors and members of the Property Care Association (PCA) as a waterproofing design specialist.
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FIND YOUR DREAM BUILDING PLOT

PlotBrowser.com is a 100% free-to-use plot and property finder, packed with 1,000s of home building opportunities. Here's a taster of the fantastic self build plots, renovation properties and conversions currently for sale near you

PlotBrowser.com is the latest addition to Build It's series of powerful project tools (**www.buildit.co.uk/tools**) designed to put you on the path to self build success.

Updated daily, this is your dedicated resource for finding genuine self build land and renovation opportunities. You'll find 1,000s of plots and properties to view nationwide, and each listing features the site details, photos, guide price and sellers' contact information – including details such as whether the plot or property is being sold at auction and, if so, when.

Crucially, we've done a big part of the plot-hunting job for you: all our plots already have either outline or full planning permission in place, so you won't have to waste your time looking at duds that might never gain consent to build.

What's more, we've sourced the planning reference for you, so that you can quickly and easily identify the current planning consent on the relevant local authority's website. This will arm you with a full understanding of the site's planning history and what's been permitted, so you can gauge whether the plot can support the kind of house you'd like to create.

The following pages are a sample of the plots, renovations and conversion projects available on **PlotBrowser.com** this month.

GOT A PLOT TO SELL?
Head to **PlotBrowser.com** and register as a seller to list your plot for free.

PlotBrowser from Build It magazine

START YOUR PLOT SEARCH

To find more plots with planning permission across the UK, and get free notifications of new opportunities based on your personal criteria, sign up today at **www.PlotBrowser.com**

TYPES OF BUILDING PLOT

New homes can be built on a range of sites and knowing about the opportunities can help you spot land with potential. Here are the key options:

BROWNFIELD SITES

This refers to previously developed land that is or was once occupied by a permanent structure. Government policy supports the provision of new housing in such locations and, on a practical level, services are likely to be in place.

DEMOLISH & REPLACE

A type of brownfield opportunity where you could knock down a building, such as an old bungalow, and construct a new home in its place. It's often more cost-effective than a renovation as VAT can be reclaimed on a new build project.

EDGE-OF-SETTLEMENT

Depending on the maps in the relevant council's Local Plan, this kind of site may or may not fall within existing built-up area boundaries. Generally, policies allow development within this zone, but control it very strictly outside. Any undeveloped land, known as greenfield, will typically only support housing to serve the needs of agriculture, replacement dwellings and some infill.

INFILL PLOTS

Many councils define this as a small gap between an otherwise built-up frontage or group of houses. Infilling is usually allowed within settlements' development boundaries, and sometimes outside of these. Gaining consent will be more difficult in zones such as conservation areas.

GARDENS

Contrary to the 'backland development' headlines of a few years ago, planners still allow schemes on garden plots, especially in places that are considered to be built-up. You may even be lucky enough to have a large space that could work as a viable site or know someone who is willing to negotiate a fair price.

SERVICED PLOTS

Land that's ready to build on, with utilities, highway access and potentially other infrastructure already in place, as well as at least outline planning consent. This route offers more certainty over early-stage costs.

ENGLAND

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

ELY
Chapel Lane
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a four-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £375,000
Planning: East Cambridgeshire District Council 23/01320/FUL
Contact: Cheffins 01223 214214 cambridge.residential@cheffins.co.uk
Plot ID: 137009

LINTON
High Street
Land for sale with planning permission for the construction of a four-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: South Cambridgeshire District Council 24/04503/FUL
Contact: Mullucks Wells 01799 582600 walden@mullucks.co.uk
Plot ID: 137132

SANDY
Clinques Road
Land for sale with outline planning permission granted for up to two detached homes.
Guide price: £325,000
Planning: South Cambridgeshire District Council 24/00237/OUT
Contact: Cheffins 01223 214214 cambridge.residential@cheffins.co.uk
Plot ID: 137164

CHESHIRE

CREWE
Stewart Street
Land with consent for a pair of two-bedroom semi-detached homes and a three-bedroom detached home.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: Cheshire East Council 24/1199 N
Contact: Stephenson Browne 01270 252545 crewe@stephensonbrowne.co.uk
Plot ID: 137143

HANDFORTH
Pickmere Road
Plot with planning permission for the construction of a three-bedroom end-of-terrace property.
Guide price: £50,000
Planning: Cheshire East Council 22/1397M
Contact: Edward Mellor Auctions 0161 443 4740 auction@edwardmellor.co.uk
Plot ID: 137084

SMALLWOOD
Moss End
Land with planning permission for the conversion of an existing workshop into a single residential dwelling.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Cheshire East Council 24/1796C
Contact: Northwood 01270 306913 sandbach@northwooduk.com
Plot ID: 137067

CORNWALL

FEOCK
Pill Lane
Land with planning permission for the construction of a detached four- to five-bedroom house.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA22/03183, PA15/10538, PA18/09313
Contact: Lillicrap Chilcott 01872 273473 sales@lillicrapchilcott.com
Plot ID: 137147

PENZANCE
Ivy Lane
Single plot with conditional planning permission granted for the construction of a detached house.
Guide price: £150,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA23/0833
Contact: Lodge & Thomas - Truro 01872 395948 property@lodgeandthomas.co.uk
Plot ID: 137172

SCORRIER
Whitehall
Georgian cottage with consent for renovations and extensions to convert it into a four-bedroom property.
Guide price: £325,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA23/06726
Contact: MAP Estate Agents 01209 243333 sales@mapestateagents.com
Plot ID: 137115

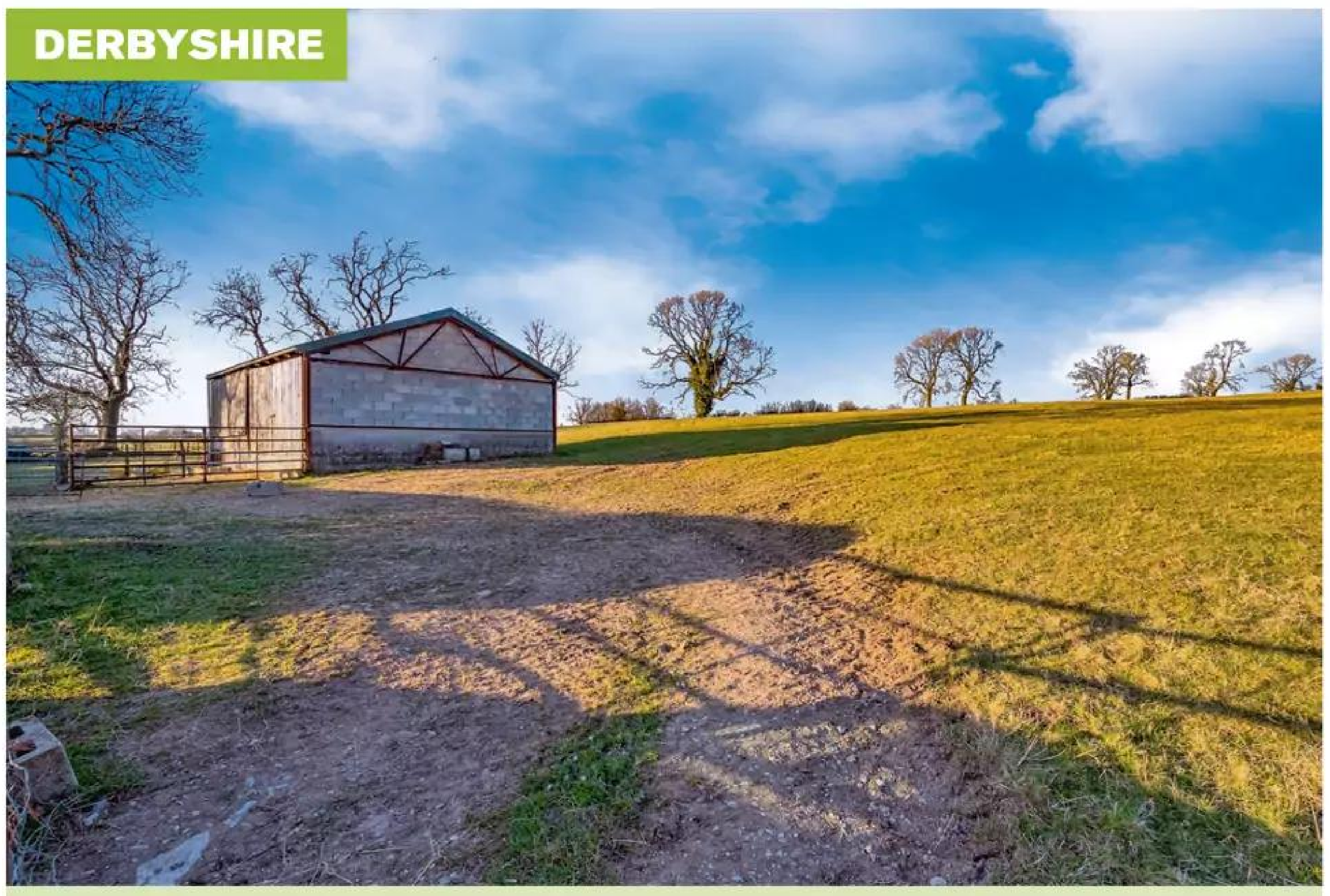
WEEK ST MARY
Stuarts Road
Plot with consent for a four- to five-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA19/03905.
Contact: View Property 01566 706706 sales@viewproperty.org.uk
Plot ID: 137029

COUNTY DURHAM

BISHOP AUCKLAND
Woodland
Single plot with consent granted for a three-bedroom detached property.
Guide price: £75,000
Planning: Durham County Council DM/16/00399/rm
Contact: Pattinson 0845 146 1589 / 0191 383 2133 durham@pattinson.co.uk
Plot ID: 137066

SACRISTON
Church Street
Land with planning permission for the erection of three detached properties.
Guide price: £80,000
Planning: Durham County Council DM/22/00517/FPA
Contact: JJ W Wood 0191 388 7245 chester@jww.uk
Plot ID: 137051

DERBYSHIRE



KNIVETON
Standlow Lane
A 3.75-acre plot with consent for the conversion of an existing farm building into a one-bedroom home.
Guide price: £185,000
Planning: Derbyshire Dales District Council 23/00584/pda
Contact: Bagshaws Residential 01335 346677 ashbourne@bagshaws.com
Plot ID: 137136

DEVON

CULLOMPTON
Long Moor

Plot of land with planning consent in place for the construction of a six-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £600,000
Planning: Mid Devon District Council 24/00456/full
Contact: Kitchener Land and Planning 01392 879300 alex@klp.land
Plot ID: 137079

DERRIL
Ottery House
The Rivers development currently comprises four plots, each with full planning permission for comfortable four-bedroom family homes, set in a quiet hamlet in North Devon, on the border of the North Cornwall coastline. Good sized plots with services included.
Guide price: £115,000
Planning: Torridge District Council 1/0728/2024/FUL
Contact: Colwills 01288 355828 bude@colwills.co.uk
Plot ID: 137087

MORTEHOE, WOOLACOMBE
Higher Warcombe
Set in 0.721 acres, a semi-rural plot with planning permission approved for a contemporary six-bedroom, five-bathroom home, nestled in a tucked-away location surrounded by open fields in an area of outstanding natural beauty. The site enjoys excellent sea and coastal views.
Guide price: £675,000
Planning: North Devon Council 78989
Contact: Webbers Estate Agents 01271 869119 lee.hussell@webbers.co.uk
Plot ID: 137018

TIVERTON
Pennymoor
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a pair of three-bedroom detached houses and a four-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Mid Devon District Council 23/01824/FULL
Contact: Seddons Estate Agents 01884 253500 tiverton@seddons.com
Plot ID: 137107

EAST SUSSEX
HASTINGS
Passive House Plot
Plot with full consent and all pre-commencement conditions discharged for a passive house, in the heart of Hastings Old Town.
Guide price: £295,000
Planning: Hastings Borough Council HS/FA/22/00701
Contact: Private seller 07887 678861 hello@xerim.co.uk
Plot ID: 137168

HELLINGLY
Cheviot Street
Plot with outline planning permission for a four-bedroom detached home.
Guide price: £180,000
Planning: Wealden District Council WD/2019/2542/MAO
Contact: Batcheller Monkhouse 01424 775577 battle@batchellermonkhouse.com
Plot ID: 137182

EAST YORKSHIRE
BRIDLINGTON
Marton View
Land with consent for the erection of a three-bedroom detached home.
Guide price: 110,000
Planning: East Riding of Yorkshire Council 23/03244/PLF
Contact: Nicholas Belt 01262 353994 property@beltsestateagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 137056

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

DYMOCK
Leominster
A steel-framed barn set in 0.75 acres with planning consent for conversion into a five-bedroom family home.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Forest of Dean District Council P0214/24/FUL
Contact: Pughs 01531 631122 property@hjpugh.com
Plot ID: 137095

WELTON
Beck Lane
Plot of land with outline planning permission for a detached house.
Guide price: £295,950
Planning: East Riding of Yorkshire Council 22/01807/out
Contact: Matthew Limb 01482 669982 info@matthewlimb.co.uk
Plot ID: 137102

ESSEX
PANFIELD
Little Priory
Plot with planning permission for the construction of a four-bedroom detached property.
Guide price: £650,000
Planning: Braintree District Council 24/02720/lbc
Contact: William H Brown 01376 320018 justine.rolph@sequencehome.co.uk
Plot ID: 137033

RADWINTER
Roman Road
Single plot for the construction of a five-bedroom detached home.
Guide price: £475,000
Planning: Uttlesford District Council UTT/22/3395/OP
Contact: Pottrill Holland 07751 886249 info@pottrillholland.co.uk
Plot ID: 137137

SOUTHMINSTER
Coombe Road
Land for sale with planning permission in place for a three-bedroom detached property.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: Maldon District Council 23/00179/FUL
Contact: Church & Hawes 01621 782652 burnham@churchandhawes.com
Plot ID: 137149

GLOUCESTERSHIRE
CHELTENHAM
Denbigh Road
Plot with planning consent for the construction of a three-storey, three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £135,000
Planning: Cheltenham Borough Council 21/00916/FUL
Contact: Steve Gooch Estate Agents 01594 835566 coleford@stevegooch.co.uk
Plot ID: 137101

ELLWOOD
Bromley Road
A pair of building plots in a rural village location, with full consent granted for two detached three-storey, five-bedroom family homes with off-road parking, gardens and views.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Forest of Dean District Council P0486/18/FUL
Contact: Toombs & Toombs

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PLOT?

The perfect piece of land would be in a pleasant area, affordable and level, with easy access, good ground conditions and no planning issues or obstructions. The issue, of course, is that plot may not exist. Even the best sites require some compromise, so it's crucial to properly assess contenders to get as close as possible to your goals.

All the plots in our listings come with planning permission: either outline (a loose affirmation the site can be developed) or full (consent for a particular design). Beware of any site without current approval. Land is worth considerably more once consent has been granted, so if the deal looks too good to be true, it probably is.

Once you've spotted an opportunity, consider whether the type of house you want can be comfortably accommodated on the plot, and if the existing consent allows for it or could be amended to suit. If it's a yes to both, then the site is worth a bit more research.

Check for issues on the plot that could increase construction costs, make it difficult to get the right design for your needs, or affect the viability of a project. Some of the most notorious budget-busters include steep slopes, difficult access to services, or obstacles like overhead cables. Most issues are not insurmountable and, with good design, some can even be turned to your advantage.

From a planning perspective, check how long is left on the consent. If it is less than six months and you will need to redesign the house to suit your needs or sort out any planning conditions, this could be problematic.

If early investigations seem positive, then you can move on to a more in-depth appraisal of how suitable the site is. Consider access, ground conditions, drainage and legal matters. If you are unsure, seek professional advice. This might mean speaking to your local council. Our useful online resource **www.self-build.co.uk/plot-checklist** can help bring structure to this part of the assessment process.

KENT

MAIDSTONE
Tonbridge Road
A single plot with planning consent granted for the erection of a three-bedroom detached bungalow.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: Maidstone Borough Council 23/502446/Full
Contact: Wards 01622 744067 maidstone@wardsofkent.co.uk
Plot ID: 137163

Property Consultants 01594 844444 office@toombs.properties
Plot ID: 137081

FAIRFORD
Lower Croft
Plot with planning consent for the construction of four detached homes and the conversion of an existing building into a single detached home.
Guide price: £800,000
Planning: Cotswold District Council 23/01048/FUL
Contact: Perry Bishop and Chambers 01285 646770 landand development@perrybishop.co.uk
Plot ID: 137118

GREATER LONDON

NORWOOD JUNCTION
Sidney Road
Single plot with consent for the construction of a two-bedroom, mid-terrace dwelling.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: London Borough of Croydon 19/01163/FUL
Contact: Kallars 0208 692 9533 admin@kallars.com
Plot ID: 137065

HAMPSHIRE

FAREHAM
Newgate Lane
Plot with planning permission for a pair of four-bedroom detached properties.
Guide price: £300,000
Planning: Fareham Borough Council P/23/1104/fp
Contact: Manns and Manns 02380 404055 info@mannsandmanns.co.uk
Plot ID: 137038

HEREFORDSHIRE

HEREFORD
Burghill
Land for the construction of a three-bedroom detached home.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: Herefordshire Council 231477
Contact: Flint & Cook 01432 355455 hereford@flintandcook.co.uk
Plot ID: 137146

ROSS-ON-WYE
Bishopswood
Plot with planning permission for three, four-bedroom detached homes.
Guide price: £885,000
Planning: Herefordshire Council 212222
Contact: Powells 01600 714140 enquiries@powellsrural.co.uk
Plot ID: 137157

HERTFORDSHIRE

MARKYATE
King Street
Plot of land with consent for the demolition of the existing dwelling and the construction of two semi-detached family homes.
Guide price: £475,000
Planning: Dacorum Council 23/02861/ful
Contact: David Doyle 01442 248671 boxmoor@daviddoyle.co.uk
Plot ID: 137010

KENT

CHATHAM
Maidstone Road
Plot with planning permission granted for a pair of three-bedroom, semi-detached dwellings.
Guide price: £225,000
Planning: Medway Council MC/24/2291
Contact: Footprints, Powered by eXp 01843 606119 contact@footprintsproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 137039

FAVERSHAM
Bury Road
Plot of land with planning permission in place for the construction of a detached chalet bungalow.
Guide price: £90,000
Planning: Swale Borough Council 23/502827/full
Contact: Clive Emson Auctioneers 01622 608400 kent@cliveemson.co.uk
Plot ID: 137045

WOODCHURCH
Appledore Road
Single plot with planning consent in place for the construction of a two-bedroom detached bungalow.
Guide price: £160,000
Planning: Ashford Borough Council 18/00260/as
Contact: Angela Hirst Chartered Surveyors 01233 731177 hirstash@anglea-hirst.com
Plot ID: 137064

LEICESTERSHIRE

SILEBY
Cossington Road
Single building plot with planning permission in place for a two-bedroom detached bungalow.
Guide price: £60,000
Planning: Charnwood Borough Council P/23/1126/2
Contact: Sinclair Estate Agents 01530 838338 debbie@sinclairestateagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 137030

LINCOLNSHIRE

GOSBERTON
Cheal Road
Plot with planning permission for the demolition of existing agricultural dwellings and construction of two, four-bedroom detached houses.
Guide price: £220,000
Planning: South Holland District Council H08-1034-24
Contact: Pygott & Crone 01775 717366 spalding@pygott-crone.com
Plot ID: 137105

HEMSWELL
Church Street
Land for sale with planning permission for the erection of four detached residential dwellings.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: West Lindsey District Council 146370
Contact: eXp World UK 01462 228653 info@exprealty.com
Plot ID: 137180

NORFOLK

DOWNHAM MARKET
Barroway Drove
Land with planning consent in place for the construction of a five-bedroom detached property.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council 21/00064/F
Contact: William H Brown 01366 387638 downhammarket@williamhbrown.co.uk
Plot ID: 137116

HEACHAM
Lamsey Lane
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a three-bedroom detached bungalow.
Guide price: £250,000
Planning: King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council 24/00373/F
Contact: The Norfolk Agents 01328 862395 info@thenorfolkagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 137159

NORTH YORKSHIRE

KILBURN
Woodbine Road
Single plot with planning permission granted for the erection of a three-bedroom detached cottage.
Guide price: £220,000
Planning: North York Moors National Park NYM/2021/0671/FL
Contact: Blenkin & Co 01904 671672 tim.blenkin@blenkinandco.com
Plot ID: 137181

SINDERBY
Kelerfields
Plot of land with outline planning permission for the construction of two detached residential properties.
Guide price: £250,000
Planning: North Yorkshire Council 19/01483/Out
Contact: Robin Jessop 01969 622800 info@robinjessop.co.uk
Plot ID: 137070

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

DESBOROUGH
Federation Avenue
Single building plot with planning permission granted for a three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £140,000
Planning: Kettering Borough Council nk/2022/0217
Contact: Pattison Lane 01536 524425 kettering@pattisonlane.co.uk
Plot ID: 137048

LITTLE BILLING
Ashmead
Plot of land with planning permission for two, four-bedroom semi-detached homes and a pair of four-bedroom detached properties.
Guide price: £290,000
Planning: Northampton Borough Council Wnn/2022/0058
Contact: Richard Greener Estate Agent 01604 230222 sales@richardgreener.co.uk
Plot ID: 137150

PROMOTED PLOT

LUXURY SELF BUILD OPPORTUNITY

DEVELOPMENT D'Urton Rise

LOCATION Broughton, Lancashire, PR3 5LF

GUIDE PRICES Approximately £600,000-£800,000 per plot

PRODUCT RANGE Customisable five-bedroom detached houses

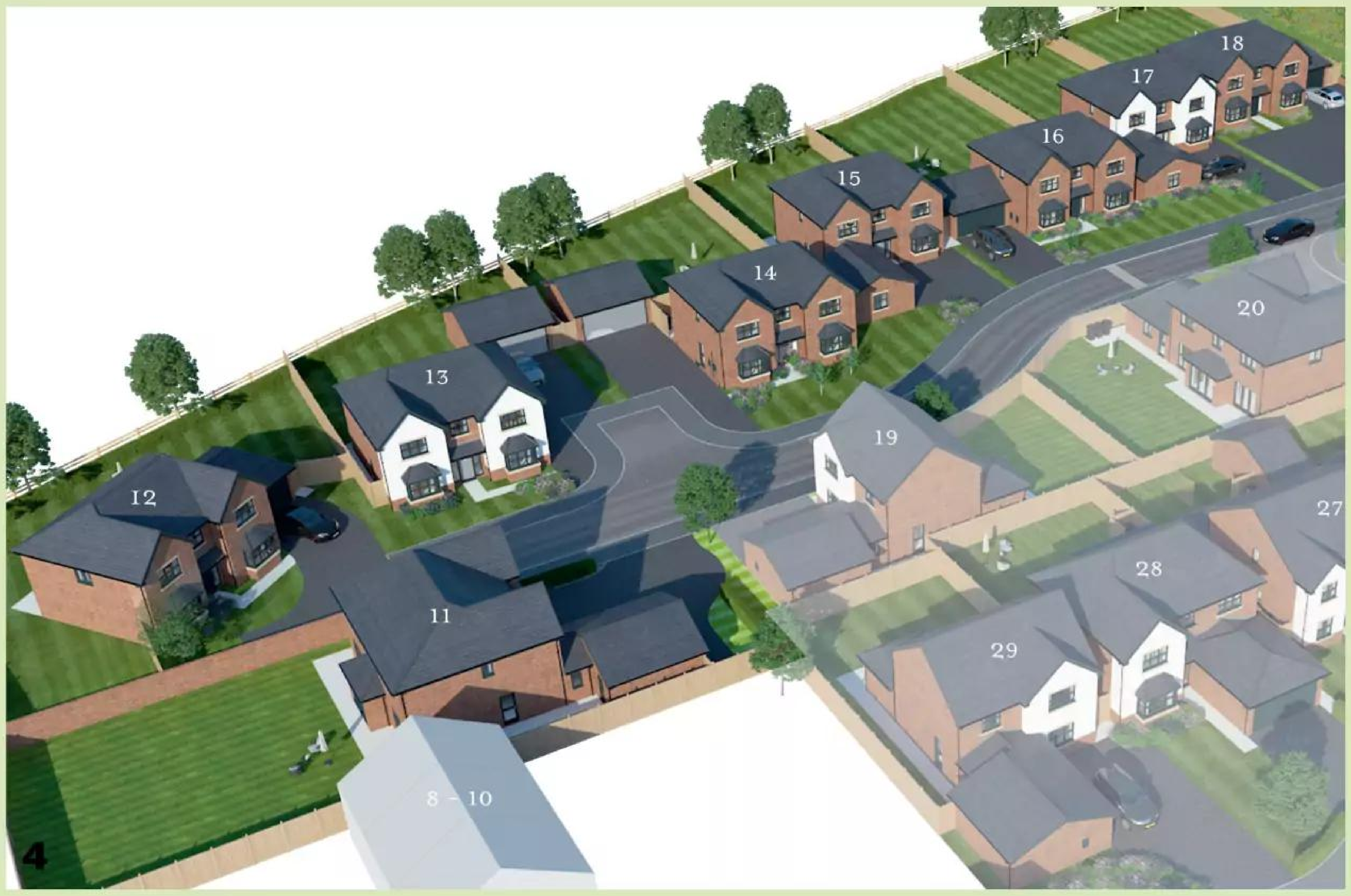
CONTACT John Lee 07710 716363 sales@ascot-homes.co.uk

With stunning views over to the Trough of Bowland, D'Urton Rise in Broughton offers the opportunity to create your own bespoke five-bed house, designed by Ascot Homes.

A luxurious custom build development of beautifully-designed homes, D'Urton Rise is in a highly sought-after location on the northern fringes of Preston, with stunning views across some of Lancashire's most beautiful countryside.

Nestled in a select location, off the beaten track via its own private tree-lined entrance drive, the development mixes traditional architecture with contemporary interiors. Each plot features its own large rear garden overlooking open countryside towards the Beacon Fell Country Park and the Bowland Fells. Access roads and sewerage are already in place, ensuring a smooth building project.

Ascot Homes builds a select range of premium quality homes. At D'Urton Rise, we can offer you two great purchasing options: ready-built and ready to move into; or bespoke built, where the interior specification is completely tailored to you.



1 Each scheme features high-quality German kitchens

2 Tiles and sanitaryware are included in the spec

3, 4 & 5 The development is made up of a collection of charming, homes with spacious gardens

6 The site has fantastic views over the Bowland Fells

For further details and to check out the available plots in more detail, visit www.ascot-homes.co.uk

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

BURTON JOYCE
Bridle Road
A single plot of land measuring 849m^2 with planning permission granted for the construction of a detached chalet-style property of around 278m^2.
Guide price: £295,000
Planning: Gedling Borough Council 2024/0008
Contact: Richard Watkinson & Partners 0115 948 0041 newark@richardwatkinson.co.uk
Plot ID: 137117

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

EAKRING
Back Lane
Single plot with planning consent for the construction of a three-bedroom detached bungalow.
Guide price: £180,000
Planning: Newark and Sherwood District Council 22/01400/ful
Contact: eXp World UK 01462 228653 info@exprealty.com
Plot ID: 137068

OXFORDSHIRE

RADLEY
Sugworth Crescent
Plot of land with consent for the construction of a pair of semi-detached three-bedroom homes.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Vale of White Horse District Council P/22/V1120/ful
Contact: Oliver James 01235 555007 abingdon@oliverjames.com
Plot ID: 137008

UPPER ARNCOTT
Green Lane
Land with planning permission in principle granted for a three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Cherwell District Council app/C3105/W/24/3344393
Contact: Century 21 0115 902 1002 info@century21uk.com
Plot ID: 137035

SOMERSET

CLEVEDON
Nortons Wood Lane
Single plot of land with planning consent in place for the erection of a modern detached property.
Guide price: £500,000
Planning: Somerset Council 23/P/1194/ful
Contact: Hollis Morgan 0117 973 6565 post@hollismorgan.co.uk
Plot ID: 137169

RADSTOCK
Gurney Slade
Plot with planning permission for a pair of four-bedroom detached homes.
Guide price: £220,000
Planning: Mendip District Council 2022/2245/rem
Contact: Hollis Morgan 0117 973 6565 post@hollismorgan.co.uk
Plot ID: 137036

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

SHEFFIELD
Mansfield Road
Plot of land with planning consent granted for the construction of two, four-bedroom semi-detached houses.
Guide price: £250,000
Planning: Sheffield City Council 24/02726/FUL
Contact: Whitegates 01246 291330 dronfield@whitegates.co.uk
Plot ID: 137148

STAFFORDSHIRE

BLOXWICH
Wallington Heath
Plot with consent for the construction of a four-bedroom detached home and a coach house conversion into a two-bedroom detached home.
Guide price: £250,000
Planning: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council 24/0681
Contact: Paul Carr Estate Agents - Land & New Homes 0121 353 9200 sales@paulcarrlandandnewhomes.co.uk
Plot ID: 137058

RAYDON, IPSWICH
The Green, The Street
Custom build plot with a bespoke design, ready to build with Potton. The plot is in a village location with rear views over open fields, and has consent for a two-storey home measuring around 145m^2.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Babergh District Council DC/24/05290
Contact: Private seller keith.lovering16@gmail.com
Plot ID:137173

SURREY

CHIDDINGFOLD
Gostrode Lane
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of extensions and formation of a single home.
Guide price: £1,250,000
Planning: Waverley Borough Council WA/2023/00374
Contact: Knight Frank LLP 01483 565171 guildford@knightfrank.com
Plot ID: 137044

COULSDEN
The Avenue
Full planning permission has been granted for a detached, two-and-a-half-storey home, sympathetically designed over four levels to account for the plot's unique topography and proximity to neighbouring residences. Plans allow for two off-street parking spaces with a private driveway.
Guide price: £265,000
Planning: London Borough of Croydon 22/05301/FUL
Contact: Private seller 020 3667 2581 enquiries@surreylandprojects.co.uk
Plot ID: 137176

WARWICKSHIRE

NUNEATON
The Longshoot
Plot of land with outline planning permission for the construction of a two-storey detached home.
Guide price: £135,000
Planning: Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council 39435
Contact: Sheldon Bosley Knight 01789 292310 stratford@sheldonbosleyknight.co.uk
Plot ID: 137131

NORTHALLERTON
Welford on Avon
Plot of land with planning consent granted for the construction of a four-bedroom detached home.
Guide price: £900,000
Planning: Stratford-on-Avon District Council 23/00235/ful
Contact: Knight Frank Auctions 020 7864 5520 auctions@knightfrank.com
Plot ID: 137126

WEST MIDLANDS

SUTTON COLDFIELD
Tamworth Road
Plot with consent for a five-bedroom detached property.
Guide price: £800,000
Planning: Birmingham City Council 2022/03104/pa
Contact: Chosen Home 0121 222 1180 team@chosenhome.com
Plot ID: 137109

SCOTLAND

ABERDEENSHIRE

PETERHEAD
Longside
Plot with planning consent for a four-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £75,000
Planning: Aberdeenshire Council APP/2021/1005
Contact: Prime Property Auctions 0141 459 0201 info@primepropertyauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 137098

SOMERSET

CANNINGTON
Denmans Lane
Two plots of land with planning permission granted for a three-bedroom home on each.
Guide price: £90,000
Planning: Sedgemoor District Council 13/24/00019
CONTACt: Fox & Sons 01823 286161 taunton@fox-and-sons.co.uk
Plot ID: 137112

WORCESTERSHIRE

ACTON BEAUCHAMP
Acton Green
A plot of just under 3 acres with full planning permission and building warrant for a four-bedroom dwelling with 360-degree views
Guide price: over £180,000
Planning: Herefordshire Council P240040/PA4
Contact: Allan Morris 01684 561411 malvern@allan-morris.co.uk
Plot ID: 137135

PORTLETHEN
Findon Road
Plot with planning permission in principle for the construction of five, five-bedroom detached houses.
Guide price: £240,000
Planning: Aberdeenshire Council APP/2014/1850
Contact: Prime Property Auctions 0141 459 0201 info@primepropertyauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 137124

ANGUS

BENHOLM
Kirkton Of Benholm
Plot of land with planning permission for three detached properties.
Guide price: £98,500
Planning: Aberdeenshire Council app/2021/2199
Contact: Mcintyre Properties - Dundee 01382 780050 info@mcintyre-properties.com
Plot ID: 137104

ARGYLL AND BUTE

CONNEL
Main Street
Plot with consent granted for the demolition of the existing dwellings and the construction of a single detached property.
Guide price: £79,000
Planning: Argyll and Bute Council 24/00460/PPP
Contact: Bell Ingram 01631 566122 oban@bellingram.co.uk
Plot ID: 137049

KILCHRENAN
Plot 6, Memorial Field
Land with planning permission in principle granted for the erection of a single detached home.
Guide price: £95,000
Planning: Argyll and Bute Council 23/01523/PPP
Contact: Bell Ingram 01631 566122 oban@bellingram.co.uk
Plot ID: 137158

EAST AYRSHIRE

DRONGAN
Watson Terrace
Land with consent for the demolition of the existing church building and construction of four new houses.
Guide price: £90,000
Planning: East Ayrshire Council 24/0573/PP
Contact: Prime Property Auctions 0141 459 0201 info@primepropertyauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 137186

MUIRKIRK
Kirk Green
Single plot with planning consent granted for a three-bedroom detached home with parking.
Guide price: £60,000
Planning: East Ayrshire Council 06/0147/FL
Contact: Prime Property Auctions 0141 459 0201 info@primepropertyauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 137100

FIFE

DUNFERMLINE
Thimblehall Drive
A spacious plot of land with planning permission to build a four-bedroom detached home, located in a highly desirable area. The plot size provides ample space for a landscaped garden, while a private driveway ensures convenient off-street parking.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: Fife Council Refer to Agent
Contact: Golden Tree Estates 01786 463525 office@goldentree.online
Plot ID: 137160

PERTH AND KINROSS

CALLUNA
Canmore Place
Land with planning permission granted for a single-storey detached residential dwelling.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: Perth and Kinross Council 24/01048/fll
Contact: Halliday Homes 01786 392351 info@hallidayhomes.co.uk
Plot ID: 137130

WALES

CARMARTHENSHIRE

PENDINE
Danybryn
Plot with planning consent in place for the construction of a four-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £99,500
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council PL/04407
Contact: BJ Properties 07572 310493 sales@bj.properties
Plot ID: 137082

GLAMORGAN

ST ISHMAELS
Dale
Plot of land with planning permission for the conversion of three existing barns into three residential properties.
Guide price: £375,000
Planning: Pembrokeshire Coast National Park np/22/0500/ful
Contact: Morgan & Davies 01545 571600 aberaeron@morgananddavies.co.uk
Plot ID: 137043

GWYNEDD

EDERN
Lon Cae Glas
Plot with full planning permission granted for a three-bedroom, two-storey home with vehicular access.
Guide price: £140,000
Planning: Gwynedd Council C24/0640/42/LL
Contact: Private seller 07545 425505 dceast@me.com
Plot ID: 137152

POWYS

TREGYNON, NEWTOWN
Bryn Afal
Single plot of approx 0.4 acres with full planning consent for a two-bedroom oak frame dwelling.
Guide price: £100,000
Planning: Powys County Council 23/0813/CLP
Contact: Private seller 07391 884557 t.brown70@btinternet.com
Plot ID: 137175

SWANSEA CITY

BISHOPSTON
Brandy Cove Road
Plot with outline planning permission for the construction of a three-bedroom detached bungalow.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Swansea Council 2023/1576/out
Contact: Dawsons 01792 367301 mu@dawsonsproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 137080

ST REYNOLDSTON
Gors Green
Land with planning permission in place for a single detached residence.
Guide price: £360,000
Planning: Swansea Council 2020/0273/ful
Contact: Dawsons 01792 646060 sw@dawsonsproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 137053

ASK AN EXPERT AT BUILD IT LIVE

Want more plot finding advice? Join us at Build It Live for our annual exhibitions in Bicester, Exeter and Kent.

Talk to the experts
Our planning experts Julia Riddle and Martin Gaine will be on hand all weekend to answer your questions and help make that first stage of your project a little easier to digest.

Attend our seminar: How to find land and getting planning permission
Whether it's a new build, renovation or extension, creating your dream home starts with obtaining planning consent. Our plot and planning specialist guides you through the essential elements, including submitting your application, and offers invaluable advice on finding the right plot of land.

Visit the LAND ZONE brought to you by PlotBrowser.com
Check out our gallery of current available plots in the region, plus the latest serviced plot projects across the UK. Discover everything you need to know about finding the right plot for your project.

Find out more and book your tickets: **www.builditlive.co.uk**

NaCSBA National Custom & Self Build Association **THE CAMPAIGN FOR CUSTOM AND SELF BUILD IN THE UK**

YOU HAVE THE
RIGHT TO BUILD

Want to build your own home?
Make sure you register with
your local authority for
self-build plots in your area

Find Out More at

www.nacsba.org.uk

NaCSBA National Custom & Self Build Association

In Focus

Build with timber for quality & efficiency

This issue, we put the spotlight on the benefits of working with an STA member to deliver the weathertight shell of your home build – and the valuable services they can offer on your project

Timber is a hugely versatile building material, used for a whole range of project essentials: roof structures, stud walling, beams, floors, cladding, doors, window frames and – of course – to create the watertight structural shell of many wow-factor homes. Sustainable, thermally efficient, easy to work and quick to install, timber offers many advantages over other building materials. This makes it an excellent choice for both the structural work and finishes in your dream home project.

Building with structural timber

These days, the vast majority of timber-built homes are manufactured offsite in a quality controlled environment. Whether it's a timber frame, structural insulated panels (SIPs) or oak house, this approach offers much greater confidence over the delivery and performance of your home versus site-based building methods, such as blockwork. Here are just a few of the benefits:

1 **Speed of construction.** A high degree of factory/workshop fabrication reduces the need for onsite labour and enables a rapid build process.
2 **Cost & programme certainty.** Scheduling and pricing is more predictable versus traditional build methods.
3 **Quality.** Controlled offsite production ensures you'll get the high-performance, modern building envelope you specified – including in terms of energy efficiency.
4 **Design flexibility.** Timber systems can embrace any architectural style, enabling stunning designs, and are suitable for all manner of claddings and finishes.
5 **Sustainability.** All STA members use timber from certified PEFC or FSC sources, so you know the wood is procured from responsibly managed forests.

Here, we're helping you identify great partners to take your project forward. These Structural Timber Association (STA) members are vetted under the STA Assure scheme, giving you confidence that you're making a quality choice »

MARK BOLTON

Above: This exceptional Passivhaus project is an oak frame build by STA Assure Gold member Oakwrights (www.oakwrights.co.uk)

Right: Systems such as SIPs can enable fantastic design features, such as vaulted ceilings and double-height spaces. STA Assure Gold member SIPCO (www.thesipcompany.com) provided this project's superstructure

Below: Timber frame offers excellent benefits in terms of sustainability, efficiency, factory-guaranteed quality and construction speeds. This build is by STA Assure Silver member Fleming Homes (www.fleminghomes.co.uk)

STA
ASSURESILVER

Your vision. Built with timber frame

Imagine the freedom to create a home that truly reflects you - one that fits your lifestyle, your dreams, and your budget. A home built with timber frame construction is more than a house - it's a foundation for freedom, sustainability, and creativity. At Fleming Homes, we specialise in crafting bespoke timber frame kits and packages, empowering self-builders to design homes as unique as the people who live in them. Every frame is precision-engineered and tailored to your needs, giving you the freedom to build with confidence. Whether you're just starting out or ready to take the next step, we'll guide you with care and expertise through every stage of the process, from concept to the wind and watertight stage.

Fleming Homes

Tel: **01361 883785** **Web:** **www.fleminghomes.co.uk**

Award-winning ABC+ Warranty

ABC+ Warranty recognises and accepts all STA members and their timber frame projects. ABC+ Warranty will also be among the first warranty provider to offer a 15-year Structural Warranty as soon as this becomes a UK Government legal requirement. Unlike other Warranty providers, ABC+ have no hidden costs, no registration fees and no renewal fees and we guarantee to beat any other like-for-like quotation!

Browse our website to view our 5* Google reviews!! ABC+ Warranty is mortgage lender accepted, suitable for self-builders or developers of all building projects, residential or commercial. NB: You should appoint a Warranty provider BEFORE building works start.

Get your QuickQuote today on www.architectscertificate.co.uk/abc-quick-quote/

ABC+ Warranty

Tel: **01619 288804** **Web:** **www.architectscertificate.co.uk**

STA
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STICX JOISTZ

Energy efficient and sustainable timber frame homes by Sticx Ltd

Sticx Ltd designs, supplies, and erects Timber Frame homes for self-build projects nationwide. Precision engineered in-house and manufactured off-site, our team will work with you to design and deliver a high quality and energy efficient Timber Frame structure, including wall panels, Posi Joist floors, Trussed Rafters and an insulated shell. With technical expertise and experience at every stage, we're here to help and join you on your self-build journey.

Tel: **0151 521 0834** **Web:** **www.sticx.co.uk**

STA
ASSUREBRONZE

Maple

Making zero carbon affordable!

At Maple Timber Frame, we specialize in designing, engineering, and manufacturing custom timber frame homes. With years of experience, we offer tailored solutions to meet each client's unique needs. From design to navigating regulations and enhancing energy efficiency, we provide full support throughout the process. Our commitment to exceptional service ensures your project's success, whether you need expert advice or seamless execution. Maple can help exceed your ambitions when building your next project.

Tel: **01995 679547**
Web: **www.mapletimberframe.uk**

STA
ASSUREGOLD

Bring your dream oak frame to life with Oakwrights

For over 25 years, award-winning oak frame house builder, Oakwrights, has been designing and constructing oak frame homes, extensions and outbuildings which meet their clients' exact needs. Here at Oakwrights, we understand that for many, building a home is a once in a lifetime experience. So, whether you envisage a country-style cottage or a more contemporary oak frame design, we're here to help you turn your dream self-build into a reality. From transforming your wish list into a planning approved design, to carefully constructing your hand-finished oak frame and closed panel system on-site, and all the important stages in between: our teams will ensure you feel supported, inspired and most importantly, at home.

OAKWRIGHTS®

Tel: **01432 353353** **Web:** **www.oakwrights.co.uk**

STA
ASSUREGOLD

Individually Designed Homes from Lakeland Timber Frame

Lakeland Timber Frame is a well-established family business with over 22 years' experience in timber frame construction. We specialise in the design and manufacture of bespoke timber frames and floor joists for projects ranging from self builds to extensions and housing developments.

We pride ourselves on the quality of our product and have recently achieved STA Assure Gold accreditation which means you can trust us to deliver you the best home to suit your requirements.

Contact us to find out how we can offer you practical, value for money timber frame construction solutions to suit your project and your budget and help create your dream home.

LAKELAND TIMBER FRAME

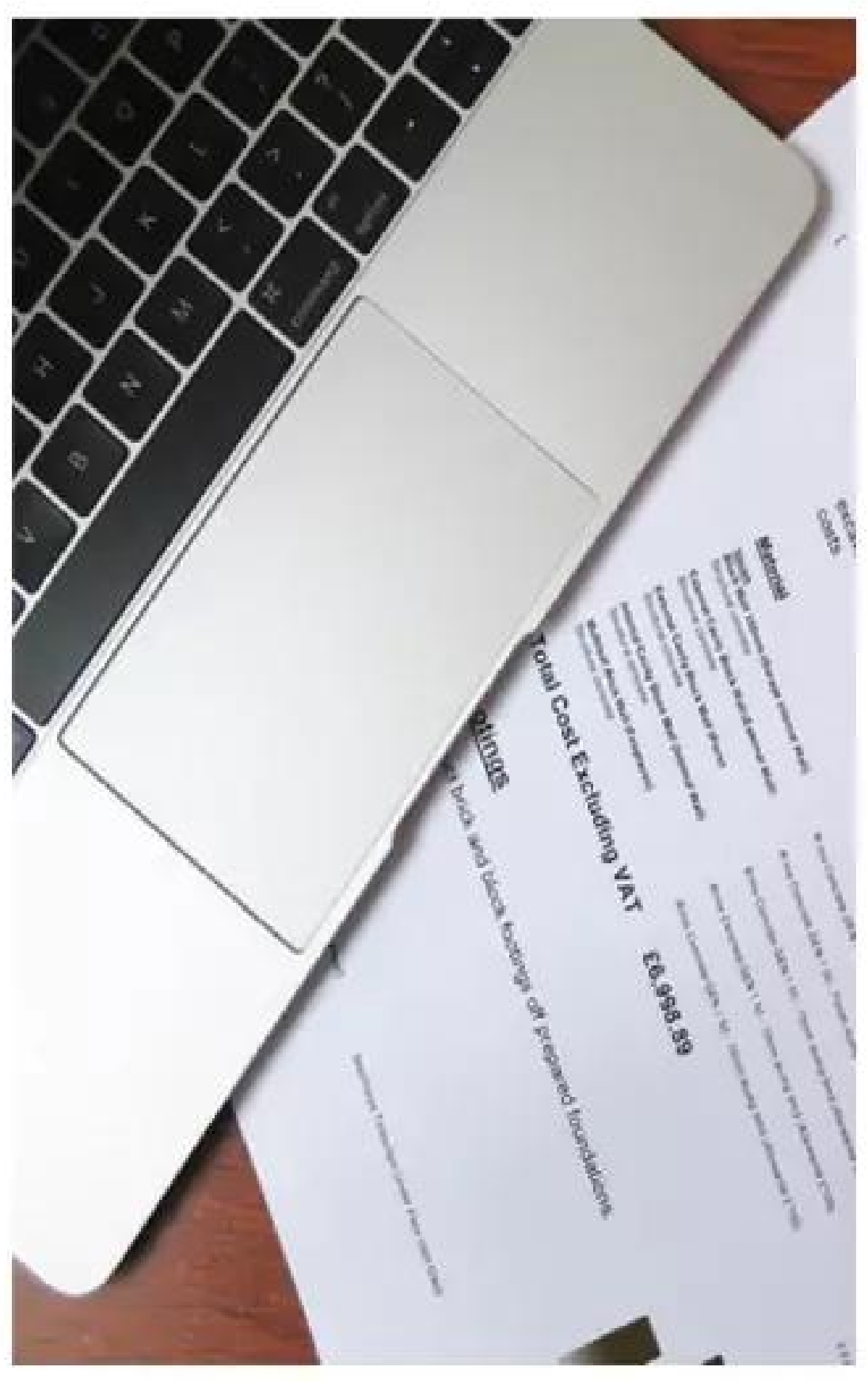
Tel: **01524 782596** **Web:** **www.lakelandtimberframe.co.uk**

The trusted choice for fastening

Discover a fastener supplier that offers you more. At Aptus, we not only provide world-leading, technically compliant products from stock and sourced specifically for the UK market (including Pitzl HVP connectors and Powerclamps, and HECO-TOPIX screws) but we also offer you advice and support based on decades of hard-won expertise.

Whatever your requirement or self-build goal, see how our range and knowledge can benefit you.

Tel: **01773 740410**
Web: **www.aptusfasteners.co.uk**



Looking to add space and value to your home?

If you're thinking about extending your home, knowing a realistic cost before you meet with builders can be vital. Not only will it help you to negotiate the cost of the job but it will also help you better understand your options of finishes and fittings and how this will impact the overall price. This tailored costing service includes a schedule planner and cashflow forecast for your extension – essential if you're looking to get a loan for your project.

Tel: **0117 916 7866**
Web: **www.buildit.co.uk/estimate**

Building on success

Turner Timber Frames are constantly striving to provide the highest quality timber frame homes, with over 30 years self-build and commercial experience this Family run firm are a safe bet to turn your plans into reality, on time and on budget.

Managing Director Malcolm Turner says "At TTF we have worked hard over the last thirty years to build a strong team of skilled Designers, Engineers and Joiners with a shared goal to exceed our customers expectations, we have been fortunate to be involved with creating some truly aspirational properties. By using our wealth of Knowledge while always looking forward it has enabled the business to grow year on year and recently achieved the STA Assure Gold accreditation.

Service and Support

We have found whether a self-builder or developer, TTF's team of timber experts are on hand. Turner Timber Frames give personal, responsive support from a dedicated team. Working closely with you, your architects and your builders, they are 100% committed to supporting you at every step of the way.

Whatever your requirements, TTF can provide the right solution, and are able to guide you. From answering your questions to providing honest, expert advice, ensuring that your project runs smoothly from start to finish.

Capacity

With extensive stock, an expansive facility and a dedicated team, they have the capacity to handle projects of all sizes for developers, commercial clients and self-builders from across the UK and beyond.

Precision workmanship

When it comes to any form of building, it pays to be precise! This is where TTF come into their own having a highly experienced team of designs and manufactures – which means all of the frames, trusses and joists are fabricated in-house at TTF's advanced facility in Hull. Working to extremely tight tolerances and have stringent quality control procedures in place to ensure that everything comes together as it should on site, first time, every time.

Quality

Turner Timber Frames built their reputation on providing quality products and a quality service. In fact it's something they will never compromise on.

From the timber used and the advanced design of every component, to the precision manufacturing and quality control processes, working with attention to detail to provide every customer with the absolute best home possible.

Tel: **01482 218945** **Web:** **www.turnertimber.co.uk**

Build better

New Forest SIPs is a family run business with over 20 years' experience in the industry. We specialise in SIPs (Structural Insulated Panels) a high performance, eco-friendly alternative to traditional building methods.

What are SIPs? SIPs are a composite material utilising incredibly dense PU insulation, bonded to OSB3, creating a rigid superstructure. This replaces the block and insulation of traditional methods, combining it into one unified component. We use around 70% less timber than timber frame and provide a consistent thermal envelope around the building, due to the controlled factory process. We use a fully BBA certified product that is fire rated, ensuring it is fully mortgageable and insurable.

Due to the airtight construction offered by our unique building system, the already excellent thermal performance of our panels is maximised, reducing the cost to heat your home and therefore your impact on the environment. Our SIPs come in a wide range of thicknesses to suit every application, eliminating the need for extra insulation to achieve the desired performance.

Our builds can be combined with an MVHR system to get fresh, filtered air to your home whilst maintaining thermal regulation, allowing a consistent environment throughout the year.

Due to the precision, prefabricated nature of SIPs, alongside our streamlined design, manufacture and installation process, time on site is drastically reduced. The average 3 bedroom house can be installed in under 3 weeks, reducing the overall build time.

Have an upcoming project? Want to build better? Get in contact! We'd love to discuss how your build could incorporate the advantages of SIPs.

Tel: **01590 642087** **Web:** **www.newforestsips.co.uk**

STA
ASSUREGOLD

SIPCO
Structural Insulated Panels

SIPCO
Structural Insulated Panel Technology

We offer a complete Structural Insulated Panel design, manufacture, supply and installation project management service, which can be tailored to suit your specific requirements.

SIPCO has become one of the leading award winning SIP companies in the UK, and have completed several high profile projects, working with both major developers such as BAM, Morgan Sindall and Shepherd Construction, plus over 250 self-build projects. Our Structural Insulated Panels offer a solution to the strict requirements of Building Regulations, BREEAM and Passivhaus standards.

Tel: **0151 424 5346**
Web: **www.thesipcompany.com**

tweed.

Timber frames for your self-build

We're experienced and professional timber frame specialists and manufacturers, ready to support your first self-build or next development. Based in Berwick-Upon-Tweed, we're well situated to cover both Scottish and English developments. Our focus is on excellent customer service and ensuring the best outcome for your project. We've over 30 years' experience and can help at all stages of your build, tailoring our approach to your needs. We'd love to hear more about your project and see how we can help.

Tel: **01289 385818**
Web: **www.tweedtimberframe.co.uk**

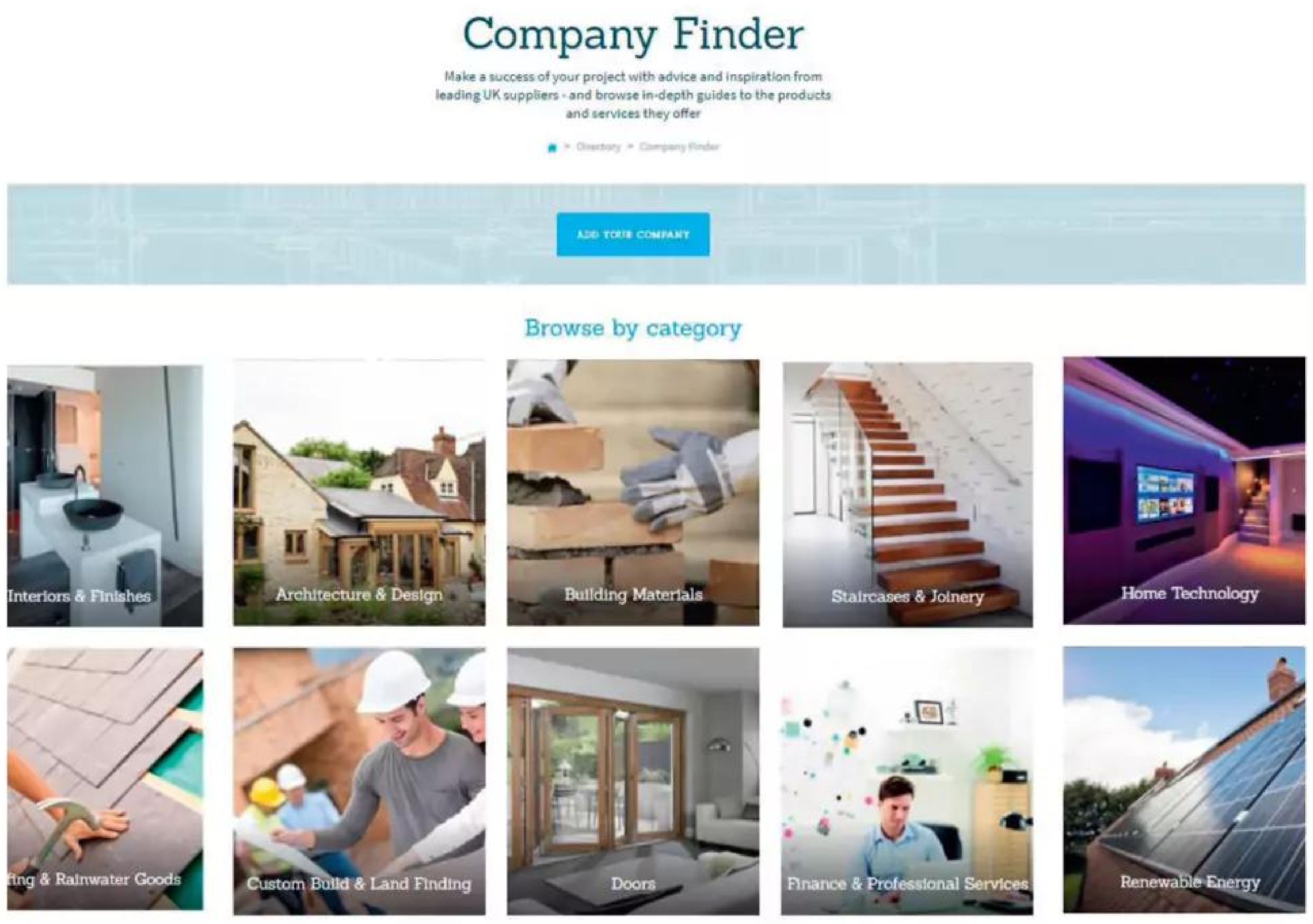
High quality, low energy homes from JML SIPs

STA
ASSUREGOLD

JML SIPs
LOW ENERGY HOMES

JML SIPs are an award-winning, family-owned SIPs kit company delivering well-designed, low energy homes for almost twenty years. Our expert team offers innovative, sustainable and energy-efficient solutions across the UK. We are committed to quality and the delivery of excellent customer service – every time. We have acquired extensive and valuable SIPs house building experience over the years which has allowed us to build on our enviable reputation as a SIPs specialist.

Tel: **01764 663271** **Web:** **www.jmlsips.co.uk**



Company Finder

Make a success of your project with advice and inspiration from leading UK suppliers - and browse in-depth guides to the products and services they offer

Looking for more products & services to complete your project?

If you need further inspiration on which products and services to choose for your build, why not check out our online directory?

Build It magazine's Directory brings together essential products, project inspiration and services to help you succeed with your self-build, renovation or extension. You can browse a range of relevant suppliers in our Company Finder, search for specific products in our Product Finder, or just gain inspiration from the numerous case studies of self-builds, renovations or extensions in our Project Finder.

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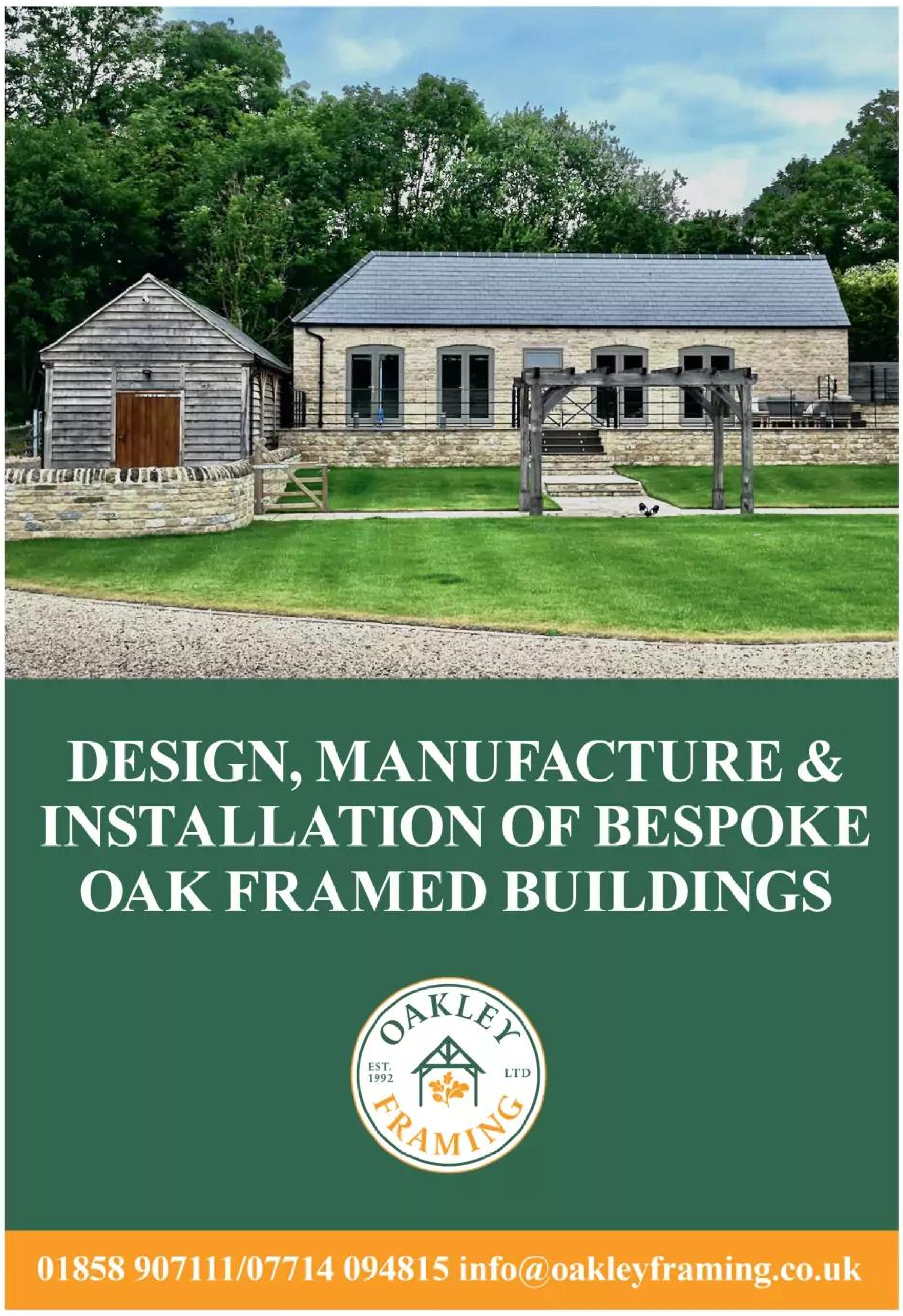

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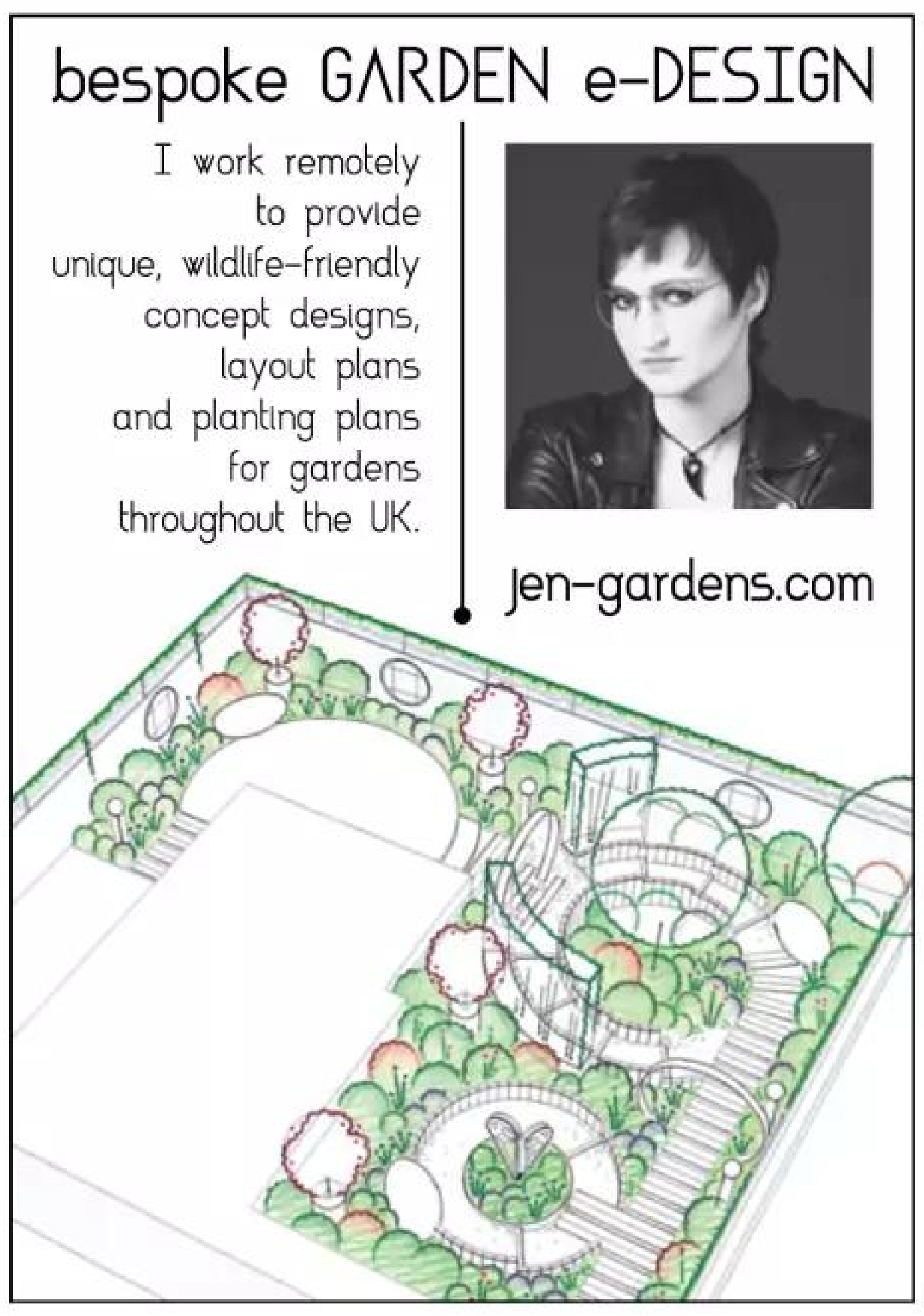

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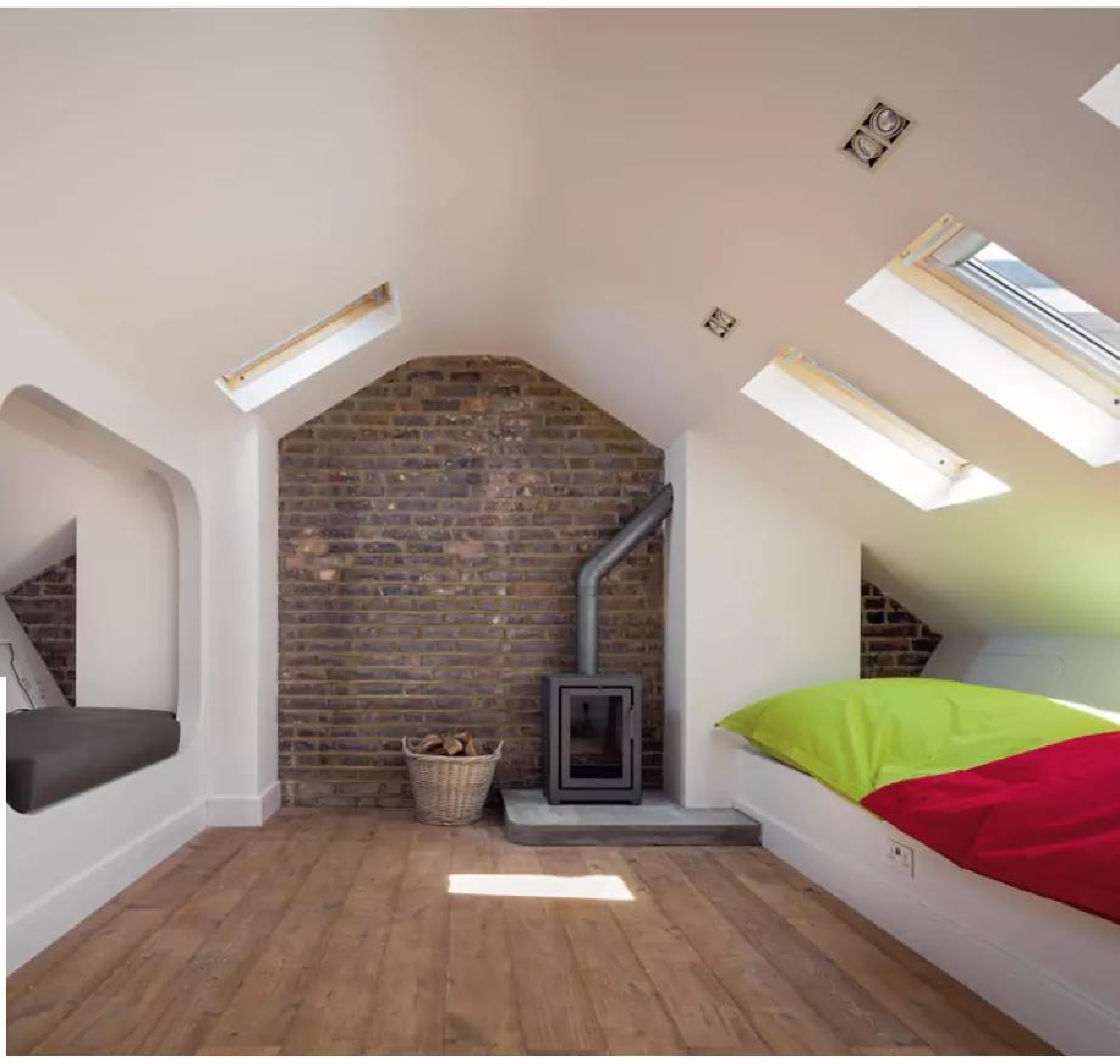

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ARCHITECT'S VIEW

PORTRAIT BY MEGAN TAYLOR

Nimi Attanayake, director at Nimtim Architects, reveals how to create beautiful, effective sub-divided spaces for versatile modern living

Designing your broken-plan layout

What is a broken plan?

This when you have an open-plan layout that incorporates various means of division, such as concealed pocket doors, level changes and low walls, to help demarcate separate zones within the larger space. There has been a significant move away from large, expansive areas towards more articulated and compartmented spaces. Most of our clients are now looking for a sense of openness and connection between the rooms in their homes, but with more definition and consideration towards their different functions.

Where should I begin when attempting to divide the floorplan into functional zones?

The main thing about designing small spaces is to put everything in a sensible position, and have a good idea about how it will work in reality. Size doesn't really have an impact on sociability. It's about thinking through scenarios: how will it work when you have guests? Can you see the cook in the kitchen? What if more than one of you needs to do something in the room at the same time?

Looking at your home's connection to the outdoors is also vital. Consider how you would like to use your garden; do you want a seamless flow between spaces or a more distinct threshold?

As this type of layout is so personal, make sure that your designer is providing you with a bespoke and thoughtful proposal that balances private and open space to suit your needs. To get the best possible results, establish a collaborative relationship with your build team and be vocal on how you see yourself living in your new home.

How can you successfully incorporate a broken-plan layout into an existing property?

The biggest challenge with renovating is that many homes were constructed in periods with very different philosophies towards domestic living. Victorian dwellings were designed around the principles of hierarchy and privacy, which can clash with the more free-flowing lifestyles of contemporary households. Yet the flexibility of these more traditional houses means it can be incredibly interesting to unpick and reimagine the original layouts to respond to new requirements. For example, to combat gloomier, isolated spaces you can opt to create a courtyard to draw in more sunlight and better connect different rooms.

JIM STEPHENSON

Nimtim Architects' Supper Time project uses varying floor levels and contrasting interior palettes to differentiate the spaces. Large openings and skylights introduce abundant natural light, enhancing the connection to the outdoors, but still clearly defining interior and exterior zones

By contrast, 1960s properties can sometimes have the opposite problem of being quite open without any definition for different living spaces. Interest can be created using layers of new or contrasting materials, and by playing with floor and ceiling levels to break up and better articulate the larger areas.

One key step is to ensure that the design vision for the layout can satisfy the regulatory and practical requirements. The input of a designer can be particularly valuable at the initial stages, so that the overall spatial strategy can be considered alongside planning, regulatory and practical constraints.

What interior design tricks can help to distinguish between areas?

People want flexibility and adaptability in their homes, and this is especially vital in small spaces. Materials and lighting play an important role and can often be used to create a more intimate, tactile and softer interior. Use lighting to highlight the different activities possible in a room. For instance, fitting pendants over a dining table or lamp niches, to illuminate objects and books, will highlight that area's function. A distinctive materials palette can also help these nooks have a separate feeling from high traffic areas.

Does it cost more to go for a broken-plan layout?

This depends mainly on how you anticipate separating out the rooms. Making use of level changes or adding bespoke joinery will bring an additional cost, but you will be making the areas more adaptable and useable. Glazing is also a really inventive way of creating a broken-plan layout. It helps to establish connectivity between the different rooms, yet clearly defines a break within the area, allowing you achieve a mix of private and sociable space. However, opting for larger expanses of glass, such as picture windows or sliding doors, will come at a premium.

Nimi Attanayake is director and co-founder of Nimtim Architects, starting the practice in 2014. Nimi is a qualified architect, garden and landscape designer, and member of the Design South East panel, which provides a constructive and consistent voice on design quality in the built environment. For more information call **020 8693 0878** or visit **www.nimtim.co.uk**

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